REASONS FOR TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ANTI-RACIST, ANTI-OPPRESSIVE FORUM ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education is asking school boards to consider how they can offer anti-racist education to teachers. To assist teachers in meeting this mandate supportive professional development opportunities are necessary. One area that needs more attention is exploring the reasons teachers participate in anti-racist education and how a professional forum may assist them to engage in anti-racist education.

This research study investigates the reasons teachers become involved in the Social Justice and Anti-Racist Anti-Oppressive Forum of education (SAFE), a Special Subject Council of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and what they are hoping to learn or contribute to it. Through the use of interviews, it asks five Saskatchewan teachers to consider the reasons that lead them to work towards challenging racism and oppression, and the reasons they became involved in SAFE. The analysis of this data adds to academic research that investigates how anti-racist and anti-oppressive education can work to draw teachers into teaching for social justice, and how professional organizations and forums can support such endeavours.

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My first reason for attempting this journey is the dream. This dream is a deep, driving force in me, and I know many others share it. The dream is a vision of a world I would like to live in, a world based on cooperation, negotiation, and universal respect for the innate value of every creature on earth and the Earth herself. This is a world where no one doubts that to hurt anyone or anything is to hurt yourself and those you love most, a world where everyone works to understand what the effects of everything we do will be on future generations.

-Anne Bishop, 1994

Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose Statement

My research interest lies in examining what guides teachers into anti-racist anti-oppressive education, and the reasons they become involved in organizations that support such endeavours. Throughout my graduate studies, I frequently came across research studies that examined the resistance teachers commonly experienced to anti-racist education. This particular focus of study seemed to be well documented (Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis & Schick, 2003; Schick, 2000; Swartz, 2009; McIntosh, 1998; Goodman, 2001; St. Denis 2007; Bishop, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and I hesitated to focus my research on this resistance. Instead, I wanted to find teachers already involved in anti-racist education so I could learn about the reasons they openly embraced this kind of work. If I could understand the reasons teachers chose to be involved in organizations focussed on advancing anti-racist education, then my research could demonstrate how teachers can be best supported in their efforts to learn about anti-racist education. Soon after I had formulated the vision for my research, I became aware of a Saskatchewan special subject council for teachers called the Social Justice and Anti-Racist Anti-Oppressive Forum (SAFE) on Education. This forum was established in 2009. I decided to interview five teachers who were involved in this forum to find out what factors or conditions led them to become members, and what they were hoping to learn from, or contribute to SAFE.

My interest in conducting research situated within anti-racist education further evolved after I read the 2009 Saskatchewan Ministry of Education document called *Inspiring Success: Building Towards Student Achievement*. The goal is focussed on bridging the academic achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. In order to achieve this mandate four goals are outlined. These goals are:

> 1) Equitable outcomes for First Nations and Métis learners, 2) *All* learners to have knowledge and appreciation of the unique contributions of First Nations and Métis peoples to Saskatchewan, 3) Data collection and reporting on measures outlined in the Ministry's *First Nations and Métis Education Policy Framework* that demonstrate accountability towards improved educational outcomes, and 4) Shared management of the provincial education system by promoting and sustaining partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples at the provincial and local level. (p. 13)

The second goal captured my interest as it identified the need for all learners to develop appreciation and knowledge of the contributions of First Nations and Métis people. In order to meet this goal, a recommended strategy for school boards is to develop anti-racist education policies that will "provide professional development for staff that allows them to deconstruct their beliefs and develop their own knowledge base in anti-racist education" (p. 20). Directed by the Ministry of Education, school boards should now consider ways they can provide teachers an opportunity to learn about anti-racist education. Therefore, the underlying purpose of my research is to examine in what ways SAFE, an anti-racism forum which provides professional development, can assist teachers in learning more about anti-racist education, and what factors lead these teachers to join this forum.

Problem Statement

Academic achievement rates for Aboriginal[1] students in Canada continue to be lower than non-Aboriginal[2] students (Statistics Canada, 2004; Auditor General of Canada, 2004). The

[1] The term Aboriginal is used to include those who identify as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.
[2] For the purposes of this study, the term non-Aboriginal is used to include people who do not identify as an Aboriginal person.

population of First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan over the age of 15 who did not have a grade 12 education in 2001 was 53% (Inspiring Success, 2009, p. 5). This troubling reality continues despite the gains in Aboriginal education since the influential *Indian Control Over Indian Education* policy document written in 1972 by National Indian Brotherhood, now known as the Assembly of First Nations.

Since 1984, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has been receiving recommendations for curriculum development and resource materials for Aboriginal education initiatives. In 1984, this advisory committee was called the Native Curriculum Review Committee. In 1989, it become the Indian Métis Education Advisory Committee (IMEAC). In 1999 it was renamed the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC), and in 2008 it was changed to the First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC).

A recent shift has occurred within the Ministry of Education when it comes to Aboriginal education in the province of Saskatchewan. The Ministry views Aboriginal education as a foundational priority within all its departments, and is now holding all levels of education responsible for First Nations and Métis education. As a result, the First Nations and Métis Community Education (FNMCE) branch was dissolved in 2011 (Verna St. Denis, personal communication, FNMCE Member, representative for the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, January 3, 2012). How this will affect the future of Aboriginal education in this province has yet to be seen.

In 2000, the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee released their 2000-2005 action plan. Within this document, they called for a renewed commitment from the Minister of Education in light of the continued discrepancy in academic achievement rates

between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. They acknowledged two major accomplishments in Aboriginal education; 1) increased levels of participation from organizations and partnerships, and 2) an increase in teachers wanting to learn more about Aboriginal content and inclusion (AEPAC Action Plan: 2000-2005). They also identified one area that required significant improvement; the understanding that all students can benefit from the proposed Aboriginal education recommendations. In light of this, AEPAC stated that

> A mistaken belief exists that if a school does not have a significant number of Aboriginal students, then Aboriginal education initiatives do not apply. In fact, a more equitable system and widespread knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and their histories will benefit all Saskatchewan students. (Action Plan 2000-2005, p. 1)

The recognition that all learners will benefit from learning about Aboriginal histories and worldviews is a strong advancement in the field of anti-racist education, as this recognition acknowledges that more attention needs to be heeded to the way in which Aboriginal histories and worldviews are presented in mainstream curriculum. It also acknowledges that everyone would benefit from this knowledge. To be equipped with an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan requires an understanding of colonialism and Whiteness, a capacity to challenge and eliminate stereotypes and racist attitudes, and a willingness to reduce binary thinking such as ideas of superiority/inferiority. Anti-racist education will assist teachers in meeting these requirements. The need for anti-racist education can become evident when teachers are provided with the opportunity to learn about the social, historical, and political context of the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and White settler society. Through this context, it becomes apparent that there is certainly a need to decolonize education, and anti-racism is one strategy of decolonization. My research examines the role of

professional educational organizations that advance anti-racist anti-oppressive education in the teaching profession and examines what teachers are hoping to gain from such associations.

Context Statement

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has now agreed that all students will benefit from learning about Aboriginal histories and contributions, and they have identified the need for all learners to develop appreciation and knowledge of the contributions of First Nations and Métis people as the second goal outlined in their policy document *Inspiring Success: Building Towards Student Achievement* (2009). School boards should now consider how they can offer anti-racist education to their teachers.

The Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation (STF) is a professional organization that represents teachers working in the publicly funded system in Saskatchewan. It supports professional development opportunities for teachers through special subject councils. Currently, there are 32 of these councils with a wide variety of specializations, subject fields, and mandates. Established in 2009, the Social Justice and Anti-racist Anti-oppressive Forum on Education (SAFE) is one of these special subject councils. In order to qualify as a special subject council, the organization must write a constitution, have a minimum of fifty members, half of which must be federation members, and develop a proposed budget. If approved, STF provides financial assistance through grants and assists with membership services, printing and publication services.

There are significant benefits to becoming a special subject council as they "are consulted by the Federation to assist with the naming of teachers to provincial curriculum committees, planning for summer short courses, and the co-ordination of professional exchange seminars for

accreditation purposes" (Special Subject Councils: Executive Handbook 2011-2012, p. 3). Membership benefits include receiving the professional development offered by the councils, such as conferences and workshops, while also being provided with an opportunity to have a leadership role in education within Saskatchewan.

SAFE has been designated as a special subject council since its inception in 2009. It was created to have a place for teachers to come together and learn more about anti-oppressive anti-racist education. Prior to SAFE, there were no special subject councils in Saskatchewan which focused on this aspect of social justice. The rationale of this forum is based upon the belief that oppressions such as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia exist within our society and within the structures of society, including schools. Challenging these oppressions can be considered controversial or too political so it is not often talked about in schools (Lund, 2007; Raby, 2004). This continues the ongoing silence that anti-oppressive anti-racist education seeks to eradicate. Given this resistance, it becomes difficult for teachers to challenge racism and other oppressions if they do not have sufficient support or knowledge base. As stated in their goals, SAFE aims to provide information to develop insight into how oppression functions within society. It also tries to highlight how teachers can develop a pedagogy focused on challenging these oppressions,

> Contradictions abound in education. Teaching involves both intended and unintended lessons, and it is often in the unintended, hidden lessons that racism, sexism, and other 'isms' find life. Learning involves both a desire for and a resistance to knowledge, and it is often our resistance to uncomfortable ideas that keeps our eyes closed to the 'isms'. Contradictions in education make it impossible to deny the many oppressions affecting

> what and how we teach, despite our best intentions. What might it mean then, to teach in ways that challenge oppression? (www.http://safe-2011.blogspot.com)

From this perspective the parameters of social justice in my research study include understanding how racism and oppression operate, and how they are supported and maintained by our social institutions. Kumashiro (2000) states that

> Educators need to examine not only how some identities are Othered - that is marginalized, denigrated, violate in society, but also how some groups are favored, normalized, privileged, as well as how this duel process is legitimized and maintained by social structures. (p. 35)

Social change is focused on how unsettle and remove these dominating forces from these institutions.

SAFE seeks to assist teachers in strengthening their knowledge of anti-oppressive anti-racist education. This includes providing resources and conferences for teachers so that they can network with each other and share their experiences. The focus of SAFE includes teaching the theoretical positions of anti-oppressive anti-racist education, as well as how to apply the theory into practical day to day pedagogies for teachers. The first conference was held in October 2009, and it has successfully held two conferences to date. Beyond the annual conferences, SAFE created and continues to update an online blog which features links to resources such as videos and other websites and organizations that support anti-racist and anti-oppressive education.

The establishment of SAFE is significant because it demonstrates the shift in focus between multiculturalism and anti-racism policies. In 1984 the focus was finding ways to support multicultural education, and in that year the founding meeting of the Saskatchewan Association of Multicultural Education (SAME) was held. Work began on providing support for

teachers as they began to include multicultural education into the curriculum. SAME was involved in many workshops, publications, reviews of task forces, such as a review of the task force on multiculturalism in 1990 and a review of the Saskatchewan Education draft policy on multicultural education in 1991. SAME provided kits to Saskatchewan schools and teachers, established a resource centre and website, and hosted conferences. However, due to declining membership and interest, SAME ceased operation in 2009. In turn, SAFE was established as a way to meet the directive from the Ministry of Education that began prompting school boards to consider how to offer anti-racist education to their teachers (Inspiring Success, 2009).

Contribution of the research

There is an increasing demand on teachers to become more inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives in order to shrink the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (Inspiring Success, 2009). Whether or not inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives has a positive impact on academic achievement, it may be worth noting that poverty and the accompanying hardships may also have an effect on the academic achievement of students. Mary Hermes (2005) offers the following question: "Is there something about a clash of cultures within the classrooms that causes Native American students to fail? Or is the low socioeconomic status of many Native Americans the most significant factor in school failure?" (pg. 12). Although it is beyond the scope of this research study to answer this question, it is worth considering in discussions about the role of the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and content in curriculum. In any case, non-Aboriginal teachers point out that strengthening their professional efficacy in Aboriginal integration through professional development opportunities geared at examining specific materials and resources and their contexts for use in classrooms as

the most beneficial (Kanu, 2005). Furthermore, there is evidence that non-Aboriginal teachers dedicated to inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives identify a transformational experience or moment that led them to this level of commitment (Kanu, 2005). Non-Aboriginal teachers can become more at ease with teaching Aboriginal content if they come to understand that they are not required to become an expert, but rather see themselves as relational beings set in the midst of multiple cultures and ongoing colonialism. In this way, non-Aboriginal teachers are integrating Aboriginal perspectives not from a position of authority or possession, but through re-examining their own value systems, bias, and judgements (Oberg, 2007). Anti-racist education is geared at challenging value systems, bias, and structural oppressions that lead to inequitable outcomes. Integrating Aboriginal perspectives requires developing trust in relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and thus it is imperative that professional development opportunities focus on fostering space for these sometimes tense conversations (Kovach, 2010). Through raising awareness of how curriculum is hegemonic, usually presenting a one-sided history of Canada, anti-racist education can assist teachers in understanding *why* they are being asked to integrate Aboriginal content.

As such, it is imperative to provide educators with supports and resources in order to engage in this challenging and complex work. Forums on anti-racist education have an influential role in assisting educators to gain the courage and skills to work as allies against systems of oppression (Donaldson, 1997). Research has shown the need for supportive spaces and alliances in order to better facilitate professional development and growth to improve student academic success (Quiocho & Rios, 2000; MaMahon, 2007). In particular, supportive networks for Aboriginal teachers are emphasized as a way to provide much needed space for sharing concerns and discussing the unique issues that they, as minority teachers, face on a daily basis

(St. Denis, Bouvier, Battiste, 1998). Mentorships and other supportive networks have also been identified as a key element in connecting minority teachers with other like-minded individuals in efforts to reduce stress, and provide space for conversations that challenge the status quo of the education system, as often non-minority teachers are reluctant to talk about race as an issue that affects education (Quiocho & Rios, 2000).

Research Question

The research question which directed my study is: What conditions (school support, curriculum or resource availability, etc.) or factors (teacher knowledge, background, values, perceptions, or attitudes toward risk-taking) have lead teachers to become members of the SAFE forum, and what do they hope to learn or contribute to SAFE? This study examines the reasons that have brought teachers into membership with SAFE. Furthermore, it looks at what teachers are hoping to learn from, or contribute to SAFE and how this forum can assist them in learning more about anti-racist education.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter one introduces the research by identifying the problem statement, setting the context and purpose of the research, highlighting the contribution of this research, and outlining the research question. Chapter two sets the context for my research through investigating the ways in which colonization continues to shape the experiences and relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It provides insight into the social, historical, and political context of the historical relationship and of power dynamics between Aboriginal and White settler society in Saskatchewan. This context provides the rationale for why there is a need for

teachers to learn about anti-racist anti-oppressive education. Chapter three provides a review of the relevant literature in the areas of multiculturalism and anti-racist education, reasons why teachers work for social justice, the purpose and importance of allies, and examines the reasons teachers participate in professional organizations that advance anti-racist anti-oppressive education. It also includes an explanation of critical race theory with a decolonizing focus and why this framework is suitable for the study. Chapter four explains the research methodology and methods used in this study as well as information on participants and data collection procedures. Chapter five reveals the data findings from the participants as they are thematically presented using grounded theory methods. Chapter six includes a discussion of the findings, synthesizing the implications of the findings and provides recommendations for supports that teachers need from organizations such as SAFE.

Chapter Two: Social, Historical, and Political Context

The social, historical, and political context provided in this chapter is intended to emphasize why there is a need for anti-racist education. The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan continues to be based upon varying processes of colonization, such as political and economic marginalization, theft of land and resources, cognitive imperialism, and institutions immersed in Eurocentrism. These processes continue to provide common narratives and discourses found here in Saskatchewan that aim to situate Aboriginal people as inferior. Strategies of decolonization work to disrupt and challenge such discourses. Anti-racism, as one such strategy, seeks to interrogate issues of power, dominance, and Whiteness. Through anti-racism, people can begin to learn about the ways in which they have been shaped by racializing forces and begin to examine the implications of being racialized. Within education, anti-racism can assist teachers in deconstructing White identity, as well as providing those counter narratives that have been silenced in Canadian history for far too long.

Situating the context within which my research is located will enable us to see why there is a need for anti-racist education. Providing this context will demonstrate that there is a need to decolonize education, and anti-racism is one strategy of decolonization. The social justice and anti-racist anti-oppressive forum on education strives to provide teachers with the supports necessary to engage in this aspect of decolonizing education.

Colonization, Cognitive Imperialism, and Power Dynamics

The historical relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (White settler society) people has been based upon colonization. Through exploring how this relationship evolved, the

need for anti-racist education in Saskatchewan will become evident as it helps explain existing power structures.

With the arrival of Europeans into Canada came Eurocentric beliefs, values, and ideas. Through understanding the effects of Eurocentrism, we can begin to see how power dynamics were established and how they continue to shape the relationship between Aboriginal and White Settlers. Colonization consists of a variety of techniques that have formed relationships and the structures upon which our society was built. Henderson (2000) describes Eurocentrism as the "dominant intellectual and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans" (p. 58). This notion of superiority was central in the process of colonization. Warnock (2004) extends this definition further to include the effects of Eurocentrism on non-Europeans,

> A key to colonial rule was the hegemonic ideology which argued that the Europeans were the advanced, modernizing force, representing the only true religion, Christianity, and that the indigenous populations, almost always non-White, were deemed to be inferior. Racism and racial segregation were the rule in the colonized areas. (p. 178)

In order to assert European dominance and justify the elimination or assimilation of non-European people, it was necessary to create comparisons between people and then assign values to these differences. Creating these differences was a way to justify the behaviour of the colonizers. As Henderson (2000) says, "Racism is the generalized and final assigning of values to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at his victim's expense, in order to justify the former's own privileges or aggressions" (p. 66). Some of these aggressions include depriving Indigenous peoples of their lands or their ability to secure livelihoods resulting in poor economic stability and low academic achievement.

There has been a history of land theft in Canada, and this theft has been glossed over or completely ignored in mainstream society. There is a tendency to romanticize Aboriginal nations in the past and what this does is detract attention from the ways in which Aboriginal peoples have been victimized through land theft supported through violent legislations. Joyce Green (1995) writes,

> Colonial land theft was legitimized by the construction of paradigms explaining Aboriginal social, political, and cultural development as deficient (now, "different") therefore making "them" incapable of holding sovereignty or land or of resisting the civilizing, modernizing impulse of colonial domination. (pg. 89)

The National Policy of 1878 spear headed the building of the railway and 'settlement' in western Canada. Aboriginal lands were stolen in this process to make way for the railway and as a way to encourage White settlers to remain in the West, and this land was also stolen to secure sovereignty over land desired by the United States. Land thefts continue today, as indicated by the 1985 Coolican Report cited in the work of Joyce Green (1995), "The Coolican Report suggested that, despite the 1982 constitutional amendments recognising and affirming existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, Canada's intent to eliminate legal vestiges of Aboriginal claims has increased in recent times, rather than decreased" (pg 95). Indigenous people are blamed for their experiences of poverty and marginalization rather than governmental policies that inflicted and supported Indigenous land thefts.

So how has Eurocentrism become such an embedded part of our society? The colonizers carried with them a sense of superiority based upon constructed differences. They defined themselves as containing objective and universal knowledge and sought to bring that to colonized regions. Using strategies of diffusionism, universalism, and creating differences and

assigning values to these differences, Eurocentrism was injected into the fibre of society and remains an integral part of society today (Henderson, 2000). Eurocentric worldview, embedded in singularities and individualism, focuses on maintaining a social order based on hierarchies and individual merit which results in a society structured on classism, sexism, racism – 'others' (Little Bear, 2000). Using the belief in universal and objective knowledge the colonizers established institutional structures such as law, science, and education; these systems continue to operate today to the benefit of the colonizers.

Memmi (1965) also identified four racist strategies used by colonizers to maintain their power over Indigenous or colonized people. These are very similar to how Henderson describes the strategies of Eurocentrism; they are interrelated and work to maintain colonial power. Memmi explains these strategies as 1) focusing on differences between the colonizer and the colonized, whether they are real or imagined (p, 81); 2) assigning value to these differences for the benefit of the colonizer (p, 82); 3) transforming these differences as being characteristic of all colonized people, thereby turning them into objects (p. 85), and; 4) since colonized people are now dehumanized it then justifies the conduct of the colonizer (p. 87), such as land and resource theft. Memmi identifies a focus on differences and assigning value to these differences which benefits the colonists while placing Indigenous peoples at the margins of society. As well, it is about making these values absolute or universal; a kind of 'common sense' normalization and then using these beliefs as a justification for unequal privileges. Memmi (1965) describes racism as something "which is the substantive expression, to the accuser's benefit, of a real or imaginary trait of the accused" (p. 81). Although it can be argued that much is changing in a positive direction in the field of Aboriginal education it continues to be structured upon a Western

worldview, a worldview which ascribes to these strategies and beliefs (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Battiste, 2000).

A discussion of colonization needs to include an examination of cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000), what this means and the effects it has on our education system. Imperialism is said to consist of four different layers (Smith, 1999) which are "(1) imperialism as an economic expansion; (2) imperialism as the subjugation of 'others'; (3) imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization; and (4) imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge" (p. 21).

Imperialism as an economic expansion involved the formation of a capitalist system upon which nation-building in Canada occurred (Ng, 1993). According to Ng, imperialist expansion required an ideology of the superiority of European settlers. In order for Canada to be 'settled', it became necessary to secure private property and a means of food production. Thus, Aboriginal peoples experienced displacement from their lands, and segregation from having a successful role in the economy of settler society (Ng, 1993).

Imperialism also involved the spread of knowledge that supported ideologies of inferiority and superiority; knowledge that was deemed the only logical way of being and thinking. This layer of imperialism is looked at from the perspective of the colonized, not the colonizer and therefore has links to decolonization work (Smith, 1999). It addresses the reach of imperialism into 'our heads', and seeks to find ways for Indigenous people to recover and reclaim themselves from the grips of imperialism.

Cognitive imperialism examines the effects of imperialism and colonialism in the field of knowledge, from an epistemological perspective. According to Marie Battiste (2000),

> Cognitive imperialism is a form of cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values. Validated through one's knowledge base and empowered

> through public education, it has been the means by which whole groups of people have been denied existence and have had their wealth confiscated. (p. 198)

Understood this way learning can be considered a political act, a form of manipulation that teaches us what is valid, what should be discredited, and what is valued as 'knowledge'. This speaks to the ideas and values we hold in our heads as a result of what we learn, in part, through public education. It is like neo-colonialism, which "runs unchecked through our knowledge-generating systems" (Duran & Duran, 2000, p. 88). It presents a one sided perspective, favouring the side of the colonizers and how they have come to understand and live in society. It assumes a universal, objective knowledge and secures their knowledge as the 'right' one. As a result, if Aboriginal perspectives are included at all, they are usually left as an add-on to existing curriculum and presented as 'a' knowledge, not 'the' knowledge (Battiste, 1998, p. 21).

Cognitive imperialism works to favour those students who identify with a Eurocentric worldview but denies the existence of those who do not. So the work towards decolonizing Aboriginal education involves a process that seeks to eliminate the invisibility that marginalized students experience, such as Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan. The effects of this invisibility in current Eurocentric education leaves students feeling alienated and detached from their identity and culture (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 88). When examined in light of racist and Eurocentric practices as defined by both Henderson and Memmi, cognitive imperialism becomes a process which suppresses certain knowledges while establishing other knowledges, like those of the colonizers as legitimate. The 'legitimate' knowledge is then what is transmitted within our education systems and to *all* students, "Cognitive imperialism denies many groups of people their language and cultural integrity and maintains legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference. This has singularly been achieved through education" (Battiste,

1998, p. 20). These are the ideologies and assumptions which decolonization challenges in the goal of creating space for Indigenous knowledges and histories.

Decolonizing Focus and Critical Race Theory

One method that can eliminate the invisibility that marginalized students experience is a decolonizing perspective combined with critical race theory. In order to make space for other ways of knowing, teachers need to be aware that part of how racism plays out is in the delegitimizing of other knowledges. The focus on power dynamics in critical race theory requires a decolonizing perspective. A decolonizing perspective examines the colonial relationship that has shaped the experiences of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, which can be applied specifically in Saskatchewan where this research takes place.

Wane (2009) speaks of decolonization as a process that "must first start from within oneself in a reflective process" (p. 171). It is a questioning of the perspective from which one has learned about the world and what one has learned to value in and about the world. A decolonizing focus is closely connected to critical race theory,

> In short, a decolonization project involves being aware of how we live our lives and how our thoughts, beliefs, and interactions with others are shaped by systems that create universal norms, by erasing, delegitimizing, or marginalizing other knowledges and forms of knowing. This awareness is the first step to transforming educational systems in ways that create an education that speaks to all. (Wane, 2009, p. 171-172)

Critical race theory with a decolonizing perspective can examine power dynamics and relationships to ways of knowing and dominance. However, a decolonizing focus looks specifically at how certain world views have marginalized other world views. As I sought to

examine the reasons teachers decided to become members of SAFE, it was important that a decolonization perspective which considers the role of power dynamics was used in my research. I wanted to find out if teachers considered how schools and curriculum work to marginalize other worldviews and perspectives and if they did acknowledge this then I was curious to learn how they felt SAFE could help them challenge and disrupt these marginalizing forces.

Through mainstream curriculum the histories, contributions, and experiences of Aboriginal peoples have been left at the margins. In order to give voice to these marginalized perspectives requires a deconstruction of the stories told by the colonizers, the Western world (Smith, 1999). "*Coming to know the past* has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges" (p. 34). In order to attain these alternative knowledges requires a decolonization of the mind (Battiste, 2000) and engagement in a process that opens up space to challenge the universality to which Western thought ascribes. As Battiste (2000) writes, "Domination and oppression cannot be altered without the dominated and the dominators confronting the knowledge and thought processes that frame their thinking, their complacency, and their resistance" (p. xxiv). Students and teachers need to be provided with the opportunity to deconstruct the process through which difference is determined and to understand the detrimental effects this can have,

> The organization of school knowledge, the hidden curriculum and the representation of difference in texts and school practices all contain discourses which have serious implications for indigenous students as well as for other minority ethnic groups. (Smith, 1999, p. 11)

These discourses are what anti-racist education seeks to challenge in order for a more equitable education system to unfold. Given the complexities and how normalized these discourses have

become in society it is not surprising that this process is met with resistance. In Saskatchewan, the relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people is based upon colonization which continues today. In order for White teachers to effectively engage in anti-racist education, there needs to be an understanding of how this colonial relationship has shaped the power dynamics between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Impact of Colonization on Aboriginal and White Settler Relations

The ideologies upon which Eurocentric thought is based were used in the colonization of western Canada. During the fur trade it was necessary for the colonizers to maintain stable relationships with Aboriginal people, as they were needed for a variety of skills related to the fur trade. However, once the fur trade ended the need for Aboriginal expertise dwindled and the power dynamic began to change. With the development of agrarian economy after 1870, the White settlement of the prairies gained in speed and strength. The colonization of western Canada occurred within a larger context of global colonization, affecting Indigenous people around the world.

Following the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, the goal of the Enfranchisement Act of 1869 was to "further reduce the degree to which the First Nations had any self government which could be used to block the colonizer's goals" (Warnock, p. 188, 2005). For example, the Enfranchisement Act declared that any Indian who learned how to farm like a European would no longer be considered an Indian under law (Warnock, p. 188, 2005). Aboriginal peoples living on the prairies were well aware of the agricultural practices of neighbouring Aboriginal nations and knew it was a change they needed to make (Carter, 1995).

A defining moment when considering the relational dynamic between Aboriginal and White settler society is the passing of the Indian Act in 1876. This Act gave the Canadian government the power to manage every aspect of the lives of Aboriginal people while, "Aboriginal people were not even informed that the legislation had been passed" (Warnock, 2004, p. 188). The initial goal of the Indian Act was to assimilate Aboriginal people entirely, to the extent that the reserve system would simply disappear. Many conditions and policies created in the Indian Act were geared at taking the treaty rights of Aboriginal people away; when people lost their status they were no longer permitted to live on their reserve land. Thus we see policies in place that purposely intended to remove people from their lands. The Indian Act regulated and promoted the marginalization and poverty of Aboriginal people in Canada.

After the Northwest Resistance of 1885, the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and White settlers once again changed. Sarah Carter has written, "If there was a shred of tolerance before, or the possibility of working towards a progressive partnership, it was shattered in 1885, as thereafter Aboriginal people were viewed as a threat to the property and safety of the White settlers" (Carter, 1999, as cited in Warnock, 2004, p. 193). After this event, Aboriginal people were subject to a variety of policies that even further limited their ability to be successful in the new agrarian economy. These policies are worth discussing below as it helps to shed light on the stereotypes that continue to exist today, to understand the investment in Whiteness, and lastly because these policies are not commonly known.

According to the Indian Act of 1876, Indians could only farm on reserves. The pass system was introduced which limited the movement of Indians off the reserve and was demanded by the White settlers. Aboriginal children were put into residential schools. Religious ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance, were banned. Within the treaties, the government had

promised support for farming. However as John Warnock (2004) points out, this was not honoured,

> Government support for the transition to farming was guaranteed in the Treaties. But there was a general reluctance to make this work. Indians found that there were no funds available to start farming or buy cattle. There were no animals for ploughing. Reserve land could not be used to get a mortgage. There was a general ban on credit. (p. 194)

This resistance towards Aboriginal farming continued as White settlers continued to complain about competition from Aboriginal farmers. Indian commissioner Hayter Reed implemented a series of policies that encourage farming on a subsistence basis. Aboriginal people were restricted from selling or buying a product without Indian agent permission. They were issued inadequate ploughs, sent cheap wild cattle, and government officials were reluctant to distribute what had been outlined in the treaties (Carter, 1995). Stereotypes began to form as settlers believed that Aboriginal farmers were receiving preferential treatment. When policies changed yet again which banned the use of machinery, even if they had been purchased by Aboriginal people before the policy, and limited cultivation to an acre which would make reserve land appear vacant, it was justified as a way to make Aboriginal people 'self-sufficient', while casting them out of the competitive farming economy (Carter, 1995).

What is important here is that despite these years of racist policies, there were some Aboriginal farmers who experienced success. Non-aboriginal people continued to resent these successes so these policies continued, making the likelihood of an agrarian economy dismal; yet this had been a lifestyle that was guaranteed to be supported in the treaties. Given these discriminatory policies, many Aboriginal people ceased to farm. In 1896, at the time when many Aboriginal people were coerced to stop farming, the Liberals “increased the pressure on the

bands to surrender their reserve land; in return, they introduced a new system of welfare" (Warnock, 2004, p. 195). Essentially, the treaty promise of entering into an agrarian economy was hijacked and destroyed, reserve lands taken by the government, and the lure of welfare became a ticket to ensure settler success in the west, while ensuring the economic marginalization of Aboriginal people. The experience of Aboriginal peoples in the prairies was not unique as this was a tactic used in many other places such as Africa and Latin America (Warnock, 2004).

While the policies described above were happening, the residential school system was established in order to 'civilize' Aboriginal people for participation into dominant Canadian society. The European settlers utilized a discourse of savagery and civilized, yet another example of binary thinking, in order to justify aggressive assimilation tactics meant to train young Aboriginal children to become like their White counterparts (Milloy, 1999). The most commonly understood vision of these schools initially was to bring Aboriginal peoples successfully into White Canadian society, thereby making it possible to transcend a life of 'savagery' and move into the 'civilized' socioeconomic order of the dominant culture, "This image of the school as the circle of civilization permeates the vision of the schools themselves and how it was assumed that they would function" (Milloy, 1999, p. 33). In order to make this a successful endeavour, it was deemed necessary to destroy family ties by keeping children away from their parents for as long as possible. This tactic also involved finding a way to keep graduates of residential schools away from their reserves, as well as the complete restructuring of the very core of the child; the ontology of the child (Milloy, 1999).

The schools also provided a much larger political function, especially in regards to having Aboriginal communities blackmailed into compliance, "the Indians would regard them

[their children] as hostages given to the Whites and would hesitate to commit any hostile acts that might endanger their children's well being" (Milloy, 1999, p. 32). This way of thinking became more prominent after the 1885 Northwest Resistance. Aboriginal people were viewed as inferior and uncivilized, which justified the inherent racist policies which formed the residential school system.

Assimilation, although commonly understood as the intended goal, was ultimately replaced with a policy of complete segregation which removed Aboriginal people as competition to White settlers (Barman, 1986). This policy shift occurred in 1910 and transformed residential schools to prepare Aboriginal students for life in their own communities, rather than integration into the dominant culture. An academic curriculum was pushed aside for life skills when Aboriginal students were proving to be of the same intelligence as European settlers. Clifford Sifton, as quoted in Barman's article, said "We are educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own people, which seems to me a very undesirable use of public money" (Barman, 1986, p. 120). Opposition to assimilation tactics resulted as "White Canadians did not want young Indians entering their socioeconomic order, even at the bottom rung. That such a threat was perceived is perhaps the best evidence that the assimilation policy was having an effect" (Barman, 1986, p. 126). As with the agricultural policies that were enforced to prevent Aboriginal success in farming, we see here how educational policies were also established to sabotage Aboriginal participation and success in the dominant culture. The aggressive efforts to maintain the economic, social, and political power of White settlers becomes evident through examining these policies.

There are similarities in the roots of racism in Saskatchewan and the global experience of Indigenous people as colonization tactics relied on British imperialism as Warnock (2004) writes,

> Racism directed against Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan has its roots in British imperialism and colonialism, the removal of the indigenous people from their land by military force and threat of force, and their segregation on rural reserves removed from mainstream society. The state, the business elite, the European settlers, and the common people all identified the indigenous people as 'barbarians', barriers to civilization and progress. (p. 198)

As current land claim issues are under investigation, the effects of colonization and the prevailing racist attitudes continue. According to this kind of thinking, Aboriginal people are once again standing in the way of progress thereby increasing the contemporary marginalization Aboriginal people continue to experience. The failure to recognize the ways in which educational and economic policies have worked to create some of the contemporary dire conditions of Aboriginal communities make it possible for the dominant culture to blame Aboriginal people for their own conditions, and to believe that Aboriginal people simply refuse, or are unable to adjust to the dominant society.

In this chapter, I have outlined the ways in which Aboriginal people have experienced marginalization and racism through the processes of colonization. Economically, Aboriginal people were prevented from having the same opportunities as other Canadians, which has resulted in contemporary widespread poverty evident in a lot of Aboriginal communities. When a group of people are economically marginalized it increases their experiences of oppression. Bishop (2002) shows us how class operates at the very foundational level of power and privilege,

> Class is not just a factor in inequalities of wealth, privilege, and power; it *is* that inequality. Other forms of oppression help keep the hierarchy of power in place, class is that hierarchy. Class is the beginning point and end product of all other forms of oppression. It is the essential structure of society, the sum total of all the other inequalities. (p. 82)

Being positioned as a middle class person, for example, makes it possible to escape some of the effects of marginalization or racism since having economic security allows one to more easily access resources and power. To be economically marginalized then, makes experiences with racism more profound.

Through examining colonization, cognitive imperialism and power dynamics, I have shown how colonization creates differences and then assigns value to these differences in order to justify treatment of the colonized. This strategy establishes and then maintains power dynamics, that include superiority and inferiority thinking, where the colonizers reap the benefits and the colonized are placed at the margins of society. When these created differences are transformed into absolutes by the colonizer they become normalized, unquestioned and unchallenged. The ideologies supported by the colonizers are then positioned as the only valid and meaningful belief systems, which establishes and controls the social, economic, and political conditions of society.

I have also emphasized the impact of colonization on Aboriginal and White settler relations. Through investigating policies such as the Indian act of 1876, the enfranchisement act of 1869, and the residential school system, the aggressive efforts of White settlers to secure their social, economic, and political power become clear. The so-called policies of assimilation are challenged through examining the ways in which Aboriginal people were deliberately removed

as competition to White settlers. This intentional segregation which denied Aboriginal people from having the same opportunities as other Canadians, results in economic marginalization thereby increasing their experiences of oppression.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This literature review begins with outlining the theoretical foundations of my study and will shed light onto why critical race theory was used as a lens for analysis within the data. This chapter also considers the differences between a cultural appreciation or multiculturalism approach and an anti-racist approach and their implications for education. The purpose of this is to make evident how academic achievement gaps can be understood differently and why anti-racist education should be a priority for Saskatchewan teachers. It concludes with an investigation into a variety of research studies that examine the reasons teachers get involved in social justice efforts. Consideration is given to the need for allies and the collaborative efforts needed to sustain and strengthen social justice work, which includes the role of organizations that provide professional development. The need for my research study becomes evident as I seek to examine the reasons teachers have chosen to participate in SAFE, what they are hoping to learn, and how they perceive their role as teachers in social justice and anti-racist, anti-oppressive work.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

The lens through which this research is examined rests on the assumption that colonizing forces continue to operate and that in order for these to be challenged we must interrogate and disrupt power, dominance, and Whiteness. It is about recognizing that race is socially constructed and how this functions as a marginalizing element. In order to begin to address these issues, we need to understand how critical race theory can work to highlight how and why race matters.

Epistemology can be explained as how one has come to have knowledge, and is about the nature of knowledge itself. It involves entire systems of thinking about the process of how one has come to have knowledge. Critical race theory has its roots in critical theory; an approach that recognizes that there is no one fixed truth, rather these 'truths' are shaped by the researcher's social positioning through race, class, gender, etc (Wilson, 2008). In this approach, it is assumed that there is no one reality or 'truth' but rather there are multiple truths and social conditions specific to certain people in certain locations. Reality is socially constructed; all of us have our own social conditions and experiences based upon factors such as race, class, gender, and ability. I am not saying that all of us simply create our own realities; rather, what we experience directly connects to the conditions listed above. The goal in this kind of research lies in the interaction between the researcher and the participants as they come to a mutual understanding, to find common meaning, and to work towards social transformation.

Critical race theory and anti-racist education stem from this research paradigm and have been linked well together. This connection was first theorized by Gloria Ladson-Billings and Tate (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Critical race theory offers a perspective that critically analyzes how and why race matters, how racism is maintained, and how some worldviews and knowledges are deemed more valid than others. Furthermore, a critical race analysis will help to shed light on the complicity of White privilege and systemic racism as well as giving voice to those who may have been silenced (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). In terms of education, a critical race analysis will assist in understanding how and why race matters within schools. It explores power dynamics and how it upholds systems of domination and power-over relationships (Gillborn, 2006).

The focus on power dynamics in critical race theory requires a decolonizing perspective as in this study where a close link is made between decolonization and anti-racist education. (Battiste, 1998; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2007). In Saskatchewan, the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is based upon colonization and as such a decolonizing perspective is needed to understand this complex relationship. Part of this perspective will allow for the examination of how cognitive imperialism has limited the meaningful participation of Aboriginal people within the education system (Battiste & Henderson, 2000) and how this has shaped the experiences and identities of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The other aspect of decolonization includes interrogating power dynamics, privilege and the mechanisms by which these are maintained. I interpret this as incorporating both how colonialism has shaped our minds, while at the same time also examining how colonialism has shaped the functioning of oppression by normalizing practices that ensure economic, political, and social marginalization.

Critical race theory (CRT) is a tool to understand the significant role that race and racism have in education. Critical race theory is rooted in the legal system and began to emerge in the 1960's during the civil rights movement in the United States. It sought to question the objective nature of law and was concerned with race and racial exclusion within the legal system and argued that racism was more than individual acts, but rather a strongly embedded part of the systems within society (Harris, 2003). Critical race theory "focuses directly on the effects of race and racism, while simultaneously addressing the hegemonic system of White supremacy of the 'meritocratic' system" (Decuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27).

Brought into the field of education, CRT focuses on how race and racism function within education, and addresses the hegemony of a White dominated society. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) view critical race theory as a strategy that can,

> account for the role of race and racism in education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin. (p. 25)

Through considering the limitations of liberalism and meritocracy, the effects of Whiteness, and using counter storytelling to disrupt national narratives of identity formation, it works towards resisting White domination. It places race and all other forms of oppression at the center of research. The vision underpinning this movement is to disrupt and challenge practices of domination and racialization that have become normalized in our society.

Anti-racist education is closely connected to critical race theory as both seek social justice and structural change that disrupt normalized practices based on the dominant culture. Critical race theory guides us to consider the forces at work to sustain inequities in society and calls for change at the most fundamental level. David Gillborn (2006), in response to losing sight of the big picture, states, "Essentially, we risk tinkering with the system to make its outputs slightly less awful, but leaving untouched the fundamental shape, scale, and purpose of the system itself" (p. 18). It is essential to keep the focus of social justice on how to make lasting systemic changes in order for there to be a meaningful restructuring of society that eradicates White domination.

Critical race theory is gaining strength in its application to educational research as it seeks to increase understanding in the disparities of educational achievement through investigating the effects of oppression (Parker & Lynn, 2002) and the intersectionality between

race, gender, and ability. CRT used as a "discourse of liberation, can be a methodological tool as well as a greater ontological and epistemological understanding of how race and racism affect the education and lives of the racially disenfranchised" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 7-8). Racism is more than individual prejudices and acts of hatred based on the colour of skin; it extends far beyond this into the structural systems that society has been built upon which ensure privileged access to resources by some and limited access to those resources by others. Racism needs to be studied and researched as such. Within this perspective ideas such as colour blindness, the neutrality of law, education, and other systems, and incremental change as sufficient are challenged (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004). Under this lens, there is no innocent space and there is no neutrality as our systems have been shaped by colonizing forces that advances certain worldviews.

Critical race theory explores issues of Whiteness and shows how racialized identities were socially constructed to maintain the interests and power of White people (Applebaum, 2007; McIntosh,1998; hooks, 1992; Schick, 2000). In this way, racism needs to be taken up as a White problem. In order to properly address racism the work needs to extend beyond the effects of racism of those who experience it and into examining the effects of those who perpetuate it. (Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

Multiculturalism and Anti-Racist Education

Multiculturalism and anti-racist education are two approaches to conceptualize diversity and they are quite different from each other. Through considering the differing ideologies and approaches between anti-racist education and multiculturalism, the discrepancies in academic achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students can be understood in different ways.

Multiculturalism officially became law in Canada under Bill C-93 in 1988 and focuses on celebrating cultural differences and pursuing tolerance in nation-building efforts (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p.31). Multiculturalism assumes that all people, no matter what skin colour, are equal and focuses on the commonalities that people share. In its celebration of cultural differences there is the presupposition of a binary 'us' and 'them' as differences are defined in what is 'me' or 'not me'. Multiculturalism does not focus on power dynamics or relationships and does not question the idea of nation building in the first place. It centers around respecting each other and does not take up questions of racism and inequities within society. It focuses on racism as an issue of personal prejudice and as such this can be handled by, "changing personal beliefs and discarding stereotypes [which] will eliminate racism and [further] that exposure to other cultures will make people more sensitive and, thus, less racist" (Bedard, 2000, p. 45). In Canada, it often resembles a superficial portrayal of cultures, as McMahon (2003) writes,

> In Canada, however, multiculturalism is often used in a manner that is inconsistent with critical pedagogy. It is sometimes utilized to highlight cross-cultural similarities and is often intended to portray "something that is quite superficial: the dances, the dress, the dialect, the dinners. And it does so without focusing on what those expressions mean: the values, the power relationships that shape the culture. (p. 265)

As such, Aboriginal student achievement can be regarded as an individual concern that is based on boosting the self-concept of Aboriginal students. This assumes that Aboriginal students begin with poor self-concepts, and through respecting cultural diversity these self-concepts can be improved which in turn will improve their academic achievement. This leaves White teachers as being the key factor in facilitating a positive learning environment for their Aboriginal students, but, "embedded in this approach are the colonial mentalities that consider White people as

saviours to non-White people" (Bedard, 2000, p 53). Furthermore, poor academic achievement of Aboriginal students is often associated with their homes, families, or communities thus making it an individual concern that connects to their 'tragic' personal lives. In this cultural pluralist approach the blame resides with the Aboriginal students in their lack of ability to make academic improvements based on their own lived experiences (Bedard, 2000).

Anti-racist education focuses on issues of power and dominance and strives to disrupt dominance through significant societal or institutional change. Anti-racism is premised on the fact that racism is a normative feature, is found everywhere within society, and that it must always be challenged in the work place to achieve social justice, "The focus on anti-racist education becomes the system of dominance rather than difference alone as in most conventional multicultural perspectives" (Kailin, 1994, p. 173). Anti-racist education asserts that "racism is characterized by slowly learned ways of knowing, which are believed to be universal truths. They appear so natural that most White people are unaware of their existence" (Bedard, 2000, p. 44). As discussed in the first section of this literature review, this reliance on so-called universal truths is a colonization strategy intended to maintain a hierarchical order with the European worldview as the most superior. With an anti-racist perspective, the lower academic achievement rates of Aboriginal students are examined and explained in light of the structural and institutional racisms that impede the success of Aboriginal students. The onus is not placed on the students' ability to work hard and overcome issues of prejudice, but is focused on how institutions such as education support racially constructed power and dominance which lead to inequitable outcomes for minority students. Anti-racism considers how this inequity should be disrupted.

Anti-Racist Education and the Academic Achievement Gap

Anti-racism can be a solution to improving achievement gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Anti-racist education is invested in social justice and can assist in creating alliances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities (St. Denis, 2007). When alliances are established there can be a common goal towards understanding and improving achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. In addition, through alliances people can share stories and experiences with each other which can enhance an understanding of these issues. Multiculturalism sustains the ideology of difference whereas anti-racist education focuses on examining issues of racially constructed identities and how these identities function in relation to each other, and how Whiteness gets constructed as normative and dominant (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Anti-racist education challenges and calls for existing structures and institutions to consider the ways systems are involved in economic, epistemological and racial domination over Aboriginal and minority people. Through engagement in coalition building anti-racist education, White teachers can begin to explore issues of Whiteness and how it shapes their perceptions and treatment of their non-White students, which in turn affects academic achievement rates. Developing a race consciousness leads to an acknowledgement of how racism functions within society and the role that every individual carries in these dynamics. It is only with this awareness that teachers can begin to understand and disrupt ideologies that serve to racialize and marginalize their non-White students.

Allies

Since there is such a high percentage of non-Aboriginal teachers in Canada, the importance of allies needs to be taken seriously as anti-racist education depends upon the work of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Bedard, 2000, Kaomea, 2005; St. Denis, 2010). Allies are key in the effectiveness of anti-racist education and social justice (Bishop, 1994) and depend on the successful functioning of social justice organizations. Bishop identifies differences between power-over and power-with cultures as a key dynamic in the maintenance of oppressions and provides strategies for dismantling power-over relationships (Bishop, 1994). With the history of colonization in the Saskatchewan context, it is clear that relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal have been influenced by the power-over dynamic. The establishment of allies in Aboriginal education, and the hope that they bring to anti-racist work, can begin to shift this power dynamic into one that is based on power-with and immersed in relational sharing.

Learning how to be an ally is necessary in order for forums on anti-racist education to be effective as there is such a high percentage of non-Aboriginal teachers. Allies are those people "who use any opportunity to learn more and then act on what they learn" (Bishop, 1994, p. 109). They actively question power structures and are aware that there is a connection between themselves and the rest of the world. They take responsibility without becoming trapped in guilt and recognize that change is a process and that to become a part of this process they need become engaged in their own learning about how oppression and power function. In discussing non-Native allies, Kaomea (2005) states their role

> is to work collaboratively with Native allies, listen closely to our wisdom as well as our concerns, interrogate unearned power and privilege (including one's own), and use this

privilege to confront oppression and 'stand behind' Natives, so that our voices can be heard. (p. 40)

Allies do not see themselves as experts on Aboriginal culture and identify their presence as one of support (Hermes, 2005; St. Denis, 2010). In this way, if teachers are experiencing anxiety in implementing Aboriginal content as a result of their limited knowledge base they can take comfort in knowing that it should not be their duty to take on the role of the expert (Hermes, 2005; O'Berg, 2007).

In fact, allies can be both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; Aboriginal people can become allies for non-Aboriginal people and vice versa. Allies are aware of social positioning and the effects of oppression, are identified as being good listeners, and show an active interest in learning more and are not afraid to ask questions (St. Denis, 2010). Allies are those people who seek to learn more about Aboriginal perspectives and history and are interested in forming close connections to their Aboriginal students. Non-Aboriginal allies seek the guidance of Aboriginal colleagues, listen closely to and work in a supportive role with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal allies are confident in the skills and knowledge they have, and are willing to share their experiences and knowledge with non-Aboriginal colleagues (St. Denis, 2010).

Allies demonstrate a capacity to confront their own privileges and how they benefit from a system of power-over. These people welcome opportunities to be challenged. Bishop describes an ally as a person who will use opportunities to learn more, will identify with a collective identity, and look at the world in a critical way. Bishop (2002) states, "They understand that they must act with others to contribute to change. They believe that to do nothing is to reinforce the *status quo*; not to decide is to decide; if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem" (p. 110).

In a study conducted in 1995-96 by Donaldson (1997) the importance of forums and creating allies was central to the degree of success that anti-racist curriculum and implementation experienced. The study found that forming a team of allies created a greater sense of agency and empowerment and that there is power and security in numbers. Forums on anti-racist education have an influential role in assisting educators to gain the courage and skills to work as allies against systems of oppression (Donaldson, 1997).

Forums can be a significant tool in assisting White teachers to successfully explore how they participate in the system of Whiteness, as forums can provide a supportive space and connect teachers to others who may have gone through similar experiences. In this way, forums can be viewed as a tool to keep teachers engaged in anti-racist education. However, getting teachers to participate in anti-racist education programs is sometimes a challenge as there can be fears of unsettling the norm, a reluctance to add to already existing workloads, or viewing the 'anti' in anti-racist education as being too negative (Donaldson, 1997; Kovach, 2010). There is a fear in addressing the topic and a resistance to become engaged in antiracist education. Much of this discussion is based upon a study conducted by Karen Donaldson (1997) who found that the teachers who agreed to continue in anti-racist education programs had a prior interest in addressing racism but did not feel they had adequate support or knowledge. Thus, when given the opportunity to participate in this study they agreed. The teachers involved in Donaldson's study identified a number of challenges with anti-racist education including a lack of support from their administration or other teachers. Donaldson (1997) states that "taking a public stand and an interest in enhancing anti-racist education teaching skills were not admired among the masses of teachers. However, formulating cohort groups and creating a team of allies empowered the volunteers" (p. 33).

Through these cohort groups and the empowerment that resulted, teachers felt more commitment and confident in anti-racist education, and in their abilities to address racism. They worked together sharing ideas and methods and many of those volunteers went on to become anti-racist facilitators for their school boards and districts. Comments from these teachers regarding the responses from their students in reaction to their curriculum programming were overall quite positive. As one teacher explained, "the students have responded very positively to the antiracist/multicultural exercises and generally want to learn even more." (Donaldson, 1997, p. 35). The students were pleased to have the opportunity to talk about issues and to become more aware of the experiences of minorities; to learn about perspectives other than what was normally taught about Western European experiences.

In terms of the significance of forums in antiracist education, the opportunity to network and be involved in a team is extremely important as teachers in Donaldson's study (1997) found,

> I feel more comfortable making a stand like that now that I know there are more teachers involved. I like to have a safety net. It helps to bounce ideas off of other individuals so that my actions to events are tempered. It helps to have a network. (p. 37)

Through this study by Donaldson, it becomes clear that more forums are necessary in order to see anti-racist programs develop. It also becomes evident that having a team of allies is essential for those involved to feel secure and respected (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; St. Denis 2010). Although in Donaldson's study getting teachers to participate until the end of the program was a challenge, the achievements that were made have the potential to encourage others to get involved as well.

Reasons teachers engage in social justice

Research has shown the need for supportive spaces or alliances in order to better facilitate professional development and growth to improve student academic success (Quiocho & Rios, 2000; MaMahon, 2007). Supportive networks for Aboriginal teachers in particular are emphasized as a way to provide much needed space for sharing concerns and discussing the unique issues that they, as minority teachers, face on a daily basis (St. Denis, Bouvier, Battiste, 1998). Mentorships and other supportive networks have also been identified as a key element in connecting minority teachers with other like-minded individuals in efforts to reduce stress, and provide space for conversations that challenge the status quo of the education system as often non-minority teachers are reluctant to talk about race as an issue that affects education (Quiocho & Rios, 2000).

Through research by Diane Goodman, three factors are identified as reasons why teachers are motivated to social justice work. These are 1) the ability to empathize, 2) moral or spiritual values, and 3) the degree of self-interest with which one approaches social justice (Goodman, 2000). Although these factors are separate motivators, she argues and demonstrates how they can work together to facilitate action in social justice and bring people together in the common goal of alleviating inequities and injustices in education. Having the ability to understand the world from another's point of view can guide a person to take action. There is a caution in this however, in focusing on similarities between the situations which can lead to overlooking the impact that social positioning plays (Goodman, 2000). In order to increase empathy in privileged groups there needs to be increased exposure to the experiences of the oppressed or marginalized. One step beyond this is to raise awareness between individualistic identities and group identities as Goodman (2000) says,

> Lack of opportunities or disadvantage are due to larger societal conditions, which requires addressing social inequalities. People need to understand that the distress of an individual is symptomatic of some form of systemic oppression that also affects others like them. (p. 1066)

The second motivating factor she discusses are moral or spiritual values. Morality focused on justice examines issues of what is fair and what is right and a morality focused on care looks at relationships and the well being of others (Goodman, 2000). When a person from a privileged group identifies something as being morally wrong, regardless of how they have arrived at that deduction, they may then be motivated to take action. It is about treating people with dignity, and using rationality that guides such principles of 'treat others how you want to be treated'. However, just because a person sees something as morally wrong does not mean that he or she will always take action. For example, tactics such as blaming the victim, or fear of retaliation may prevent social justice work. In order to encourage a moral stance in social justice work, people need to be made cognizant of the inequalities in society. Through anti-racism, teachers can then learn about the racism that exists and how it produces unequal student outcomes (Goodman, 2000).

The third motivating factor is the degree of self interest with which one approaches social justice. Although this can be interpreted as very selfish, it can work in ways that allows people to consider how it will benefit them as well as others, in almost a kind of relational way. To explore the danger in this we need to go back to the work by St. Denis & Schick (2003) which explores goodness and innocence, in helping others, as a way to maintain a sense of superiority over others. To address this as a legitimate concern, Goodman (2000) explores an interdependent perspective that changes it from 'you' and 'me' to 'us', "From this

interdependent perspective, since our lives and fates are intertwined, social justice efforts are being done for our collective benefit" (p. 1074). The implications of this principle requires that people may need to go against the grain and give up immediate security or safety for the benefit of the collective good.

In looking at what motivates outgroup activists (those of a privileged group who work with groups with less power), Borshuk (2004) found that the influence of family or friends and the relationships they held with these people were significant in motivating the participants to social justice work. People can become involved due to the influence and relationships they have with others to whom they are connected. Beyond this, there was also discussion about certain personal attributes, such as beliefs, values, and moral principles, as factors that motivated them towards social justice work,

> These activists spoke of their engagement in social movements as a natural outplay of their core sense of self, shaped by childhood experiences and in many cases, by their feelings of marginality within their own primary social groups. (Borshuk, 2004, p. 10)

These people also paid more attention to the similarities they had in common with outgroup members, and focused on their shared common humanity. They acknowledge that differences existed, and acknowledged their role as allies in this; by not speaking for them or getting overwhelmed by guilt in knowing they do not suffer the same level of oppression. Motivations, as described in the findings of this study, incorporated significant relationships as well as personal characteristics, "Most, however, made reference to some experience of marginality in their personal lives, which may have been important to the development of empathy for less privileged outsiders" (Borshuk, 2004, p 14).

Although I have just outlined a few reasons for why people might engage in social justice work, it is not as simple as selecting motivations from a checklist of options. Many other explanations are also possible for why an individual works for social justice. In other words, determining exactly how and why the privileged work for social justice is not easy. Whatever their individual motivations, what people from privileged groups are encouraged to do is shaped by the economic and political context, including the capacity to organize. Furthermore, unlike the poor and marginalized, people from privileged groups can take up or put aside this work at any time whereas the poor and marginalized have to deal with it all the time.

Marshall and Anderson (2009) found that the activists they studied were fuelled into action for a variety of reasons and that no single incident or reason alone inspired activism. Their activists were

> inspired to become active for social justice by empathy that arose from seeing or experiencing victimization; a sense of identification coming from community heritage and family values; ideals about educators' roles; convictions about women's rights; and a sense that one's personal spirituality is interconnected with issues of inequity and intolerance. (p. 127)

These activists were able to recognize the harm which results from oppression and inequities and as a result took action to prevent future harm to others. Some were lead to their activism through critical moments while others came to it through a gradual process of building awareness of a problem. A recurring reason for activism efforts included their values and identities, and their educational background. Many attributed their higher education and their value systems (passed down through family backgrounds) as key reasons for their interest and involvement in social justice work. Some felt that as educators, they held a special role and obligation to make the

world a better place for all, while others spoke about teaching as being about freedom and liberation.

Some of the major findings in their studies include knowledge that many activists engage in more subtle, and quieter forms of activism at the micro political level, and that there is a pronounced fear of being negatively labeled and the subsequent backlash that may result from such a label. They also found that activism appeared less risky for those who are well established in their careers or who had secure leadership positions and that activists often feel isolated and that activism can be quite fragmented (Marshall and Anderson, 2009). For these activists, finding support in mentors and allies assisted in reducing their isolation and in building their confidence and strength. Mentors can work to teach others their particular skill set, can expose others to particular social movements or organizations that promote social justice, and can help novice activists become more expert in the cause. In a study by Ollis (2011), which investigates the learning dimensions of activists, activists were found to "use mentors and older, more experienced activists to learn from; they work in and with communities and social movements to develop their skills. The majority of their skills develop through situating themselves with other activists in a learning community of practice" (p. 259). Activists learn from one another and as such they need to be connected with other activists and be provided with opportunities to build relationships and network with one another.

Reasons to join Professional Organizations

Professional organizations are typically associated with specific professions and they work to represent and advance the profession. In addition, a forum can also be a professional organization. The social justice and anti-racist anti-oppressive forum on education (SAFE) is an

example of a professional organization as it is categorized as a special subject council by the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation, the professional organization representing all teachers who work in publicly funded schools. These organizations focus both on providing learning opportunities for its members as well as providing advocacy and guidelines for the profession itself. Bauman (2008) describes the purpose of professional organizations to

> advance and disseminate specialized knowledge and information by publishing journals, newsletters, and other materials. They provide opportunities for continuing education and professional development, such as conferences and workshops, and offer prospects for networking among members. (p. 164)

Professional organizations may also set standards of practice for the profession and establish a code of ethics. Benefits for members include networking and leadership opportunities, professional development, as well as "professional recognition, advocacy, service, and shaping the future direction of the field....and reduced registration fees at conferences" (Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005, p. 337-38). Research suggests that teachers need to engage in aspects of professional development in order to strengthen their pedagogy (Hirsh, 2010). So in order for teachers to develop their teaching skills they should be provided with professional development opportunities, and this is a need that professional organizations can fill.

Membership in professional organizations adds to a sense of professional identity, adds value, prestige, or credibility (Bauman, 2008; Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005), and this can be a reason why people join such organizations. Some people are attracted to the perception of value to others through their membership or affiliation with professional organizations. Bauman's (2008) work focuses specifically on school counselor's in the United States and demonstrates that one of the strongest reasons they join is that "professional associations and

membership is [sic] important to not only keep abreast of the individual's field, but it is also important to be 'active' within one's professional organization to have a 'voice' on any and all issues that arise statewide and nationally" (p. 170). Many held strong personal beliefs about memberships and felt that having a professional membership adds to their professionalism as counselors, regardless of the organizations with which they held memberships. For some, this demonstrated a valued level of commitment to the chosen field.

Another reason people seek out professional organizations is for the networking opportunities and for sharing knowledge and expertise (Kamm, 1997; Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005; Bauman 2008). Research shows that people want to establish a network of like minded colleagues and to start building relationships, especially for those that are new to the profession. Networks often lead to sharing information and exchanging new ideas and partnerships, which can add to overall job satisfaction and performance (Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005). Networking opens up opportunities for collegial sharing of experiences and information, so when peers participate in the same organizations they build more common ground to strengthen their relationships (Thackeray, Neiger & Roe, 2005; Bauman, 2008). When people actively build relationships with colleagues this can strengthen learning opportunities and help teachers to stay more informed on current practices (Larrabee & Morehead, 2011). However, there is a cautionary note about networks becoming too social with not enough emphasis on action and learning "too much time talking and not enough time doing" (Bauman, 2008, p. 172). For some there is a concern that networking can evolve into opportunities to socialize which is a source of tension for those who are actively committed to findings ways to make meaningful changes within their own personal careers or within the profession at large.

Others use professional organizations for career and leadership opportunities, to stay up to date on current information related to the field, or to advance or advocate for a specific cause for which they are passionate (Bauman, 2008; Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005). Conferences are a way in which people can stay up to date on current trends and develop new ideas, but attendance at these conferences can be a barrier for rural members when conferences are held in urban centres (Bauman, 2008; Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005). Some value the learning experience offered by conferences, while others find them a waste of time. As a result, there is a caution that continuing educational opportunities and professional development should be applicable to the real life situations of members in their careers (Bauman. 2008). Information that is disseminated by the organization is a reason why people join as they are seeking ways to stay informed and up to date. This can be distributed through journals, newsletters, and conferences or other professional development workshops, and in many cases registration fees are reduced for members (Bauman, 2008). Some people heavily value the advocacy that these organizations can provide for specific causes, such as social justice issues. In these instances, they look for an element of advocacy that is established within the mandate and goal of the organization (Kamm, 1997). Still others join these organizations because of the leadership opportunities they provide such as giving presentations or providing feedback (Kamm, 1997).

As discussed above, there are many reasons people join professional organizations. Some of the most prominent reasons include the networking opportunities they provide, the credibility memberships brings to the individual, and the professional development that is offered to members.

Conclusion

Forums and professional organizations can be influential in assisting educators in anti-racist work and fill the need for providing supportive spaces and opportunities to meet allies. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, in recognizing the benefit of all students to learn about the histories and contributions of Aboriginal people, is now recommending that school boards begin offering professional development opportunities that focus on anti-racist education (Inspiring Success, 2009). Organizations that support professional development in anti-racist anti-oppressive education can enhance the ability for teachers to become familiarized with how to shift their pedagogy towards an anti-racist framework. According to Hirsh (2010), most teachers need structured and organized learning opportunities in order to learn how to make pedagogical changes. Research shows that engagement in anti-racist education requires a shift in thinking towards a decolonized approach to pedagogy, and supportive professional development activities. This includes the formation of allies. It also requires an understanding of how racism creates economic inequality. My research builds on these studies by examining the reasons Saskatchewan teachers have joined SAFE, an organization that provides support for teachers wanting to learn more about anti-racist anti-oppressive work. Through investigating the reasons Saskatchewan teachers decided to become a member of SAFE, and what they are hoping to learn or contribute to SAFE, this research outlines ways professional organizations can best support anti-racist anti-oppressive education.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The study follows a qualitative design that combines a critical race analysis with a decolonizing focus to examine and describe the reasons teachers sought out a professional organization that focused on anti-racist anti-oppressive education. Grounded theory methods are employed for data analysis.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory within qualitative research seeks to interpret and understand the world of the participants' lives. It is focused on the data that are collected and analysed by the researcher in such a way as to attempt to make meaning out of their lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006; Birks & Mills, 2011). As such, it is imperative that the researcher engage in relationship building with the participants "We gain access through the trust that emerges through establishing on-going relationships and reciprocities. Ignoring such reciprocities not only weakens your chances of obtaining telling data but, moreover, dehumanizes your research participants – and yourself" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 110).

Through grounded theory the researcher attempts to analyze how the participants understand: "We try to learn what occurs in the research setting we join and what our research participants' lives are like. We study how they explain their statements and actions, and ask what analytic sense we can make of them" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2-3). This is done through a series of data analysis such as coding, memoing, and verification of the results. Through grounded theory methods the researcher is able to create codes that emerge from the data and identify the meanings found within these themes.

Grounded theory methods are particularly appropriate for this study as it involves an inductive approach. In this way, data analysis can begin from particular responses, facts, or ideas and move to a more general, thematic approach. Although I did not set out to prove or disprove something, through my literature review I learned that participation in a forum can enhance engagement in anti-oppressive anti-racist education. Through analyzing the data, I aimed to determine issues of importance as they emerged and made note of the relationships between these themes. Grounded theory involves categorical grouping and coding according to emergent themes and ongoing analysis, and provides clear methods to obtain the data (Charmaz, 2006). Through the process of coding, grounded theory methods enable the researcher to work towards capturing and interpreting participant experiences. Charmaz (2006) says,

> From the start, careful word-by-word, line-by-line, incident-by-incident coding moves you toward fulfilling two criteria for completing a grounded theory analysis: fit and relevance. Your study fits the empirical world when you have constructed codes and developed them into categories that crystallize participants' experience. It has relevance when you offer an incisive analytic framework that interprets what is happening and makes relationships between implicit processes and structures visible. (p. 54)

I combined a critical race analysis with a decolonizing focus as the lens from which to analyze the data. Combining both of these can help us examine power dynamics, racism, how racism is maintained, and relationships to ways of knowing and dominance - how certain worldviews have marginalized other worldviews. It is from this lens that I analyzed the responses of my participant and looked for issues of importance as they emerged from the data. My goal was to establish what the pertinent concerns were within the data and then to interpret and determine (using my methodological lens) the connections between them. These perspectives and methods

combined helped to analyze the data to reveal in what ways forums such as SAFE can be a useful tool in supporting anti-racist education.

The data were analyzed using grounded theory methods. This analysis was selected as there are "flexible guidelines for data collection and data analysis, commitments to remain close to the world being studied, and the development of integrated theoretical concepts grounded in data that show process, relationship, and social world connectedness" (Denzin in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 455). However, rather than developing theory, my purpose was to engage with theory in an interactive process as I analyzed the data. In the initial stages of analysis, considerations are given to how participants view their situation and what factors influence their perspectives. As the work progresses, connections are made between the participants' lived reality and larger social structures (Charmaz, 2006, p. 133). Given the limited scope of my study, consisting of five interviews, grounded theory methods were the focus in this research study as it enabled the identification of emergent categories and the identification of the relationships between these categories. My goal was never to build theory as there were not enough data in this study. Rather, I used the grounded theory *methods* of processing and analyzing data.

Participants

The data were gathered from five teachers who attended the SAFE conference in October 2010. Of the five participants, two teachers were teaching in urban school districts, two were in rural districts. Four of these five teachers had completed, or were in the process of completing graduate studies. The other teacher had taken an undergraduate course containing an anti-racist perspective and was also a student in a social and ecological cohort.

In order to recruit and interview teachers who demonstrated a commitment to anti-racist anti-oppressive education, boundaries needed to be set in terms of which teachers would be

selected for my study. I wanted to speak to those who were actively teaching, and who were in attendance at the first SAFE conference as I believe that clearly showed their interest in wanting to learn more about racism and oppression. Therefore, the criteria used to select participants included 1) actively teaching with in a Saskatchewan school; b) non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal representation, and 3) attendance at the SAFE conference on October 22-23, 2010. My initial intent was to conduct interviews with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers with the aim of providing a comparative analysis. Non-Aboriginal teachers were defined as those who identified with being a member of White settler society. However, no Aboriginal teachers volunteered to participate in this study. The participants, therefore, were comprised of non-Aboriginal teachers and teachers who identified as visible minorities. I conducted five interviews in total; three teachers identified as being of White settler society, and two identified as being Canadian-born visible minorities. It is also important to mention that one participant was not actively teaching in a Saskatchewan school at the time of the interview, but had been a teacher in a Saskatchewan school that year. This occurred strictly due to the availability of people who volunteered to participate in my study.

There is one significant reason that comes to mind for why no Aboriginal teachers volunteered to participate in my study. The presence of Aboriginal teachers compared to non-Aboriginal teachers present at the SAFE conference was not equal, just as the number of Aboriginal teachers within Saskatchewan is significantly less than the number of non-Aboriginal teachers in Saskatchewan. There was a much smaller number of Aboriginal teachers who attended the SAFE conference and so there was a much smaller pool from which to draw participants; they could have been less likely to respond to the invitation. Moreover, Aboriginal teachers may have been concerned with being identified or unable to participate for other

reasons. I decided to interview teachers who were involved in SAFE because the study set out to examine the reasons why teachers choose to participate in organizations focused on anti-racist anti-oppressive education. As well, SAFE was selected due to the optimum conditions in that the interviews would follow the conference, providing participants an opportunity to reflect on their involvement with SAFE.

Data Collection

To recruit participants for this study, a co-chair of SAFE sent out a letter of invitation (see appendix A) through email to all the SAFE members who were in attendance at the conference on October 22nd and 23rd 2010. This was sent as a mass email list and they were provided with instructions to respond directly to me by email to indicate their willingness to act as a participant in this study. This email was sent out a second time as a way to encourage participation. When a number of interested teachers replied, I checked to make sure that they were teachers within the Saskatchewan education system, and confirmed that they had attended the conference. The interviews were conducted between the end of January 2011 and the end of February 2011. Each interview was audio-taped and lasted no more than an hour and a half. I personally transcribed the interviews, collected the transcript release forms, and coded and analyzed the data.

Before each interview began, I spent on average about 20-30 minutes having an informal conversation with each participant. This was to establish a sense of relationship and comfort, and provided an opportunity to become more familiar with the participants and their backgrounds. Most were eager to engage in conversation and the sharing of information was reciprocal. It was in these times that I shared some of my own experiences and personal

information. Creating this sense of relationality is highly significant in utilizing grounded theory methods as it is essential to the research process that the researcher develop good rapport with the participants (Charmaz, 2006). It is with this greater sense of connection that the interview process can be more beneficial.

The interview questions focussed on uncovering the reasons they decided to become members of SAFE (see appendix B for interview questions). They were asked what factors contributed to them becoming a member of SAFE, if there was a particular experience or event that led them to become actively involved in anti-racist education, and if they had any other previous exposure to anti-racist education. They were asked what they were hoping to learn from or contribute to SAFE as well as what they saw as systematic or personal challenges that prevented engagement with anti-racist education. They were asked to consider ways SAFE can assist in engagement with anti-racist education and what resources they were hoping would be provided. Finally, they were asked how they thought they grew and developed as a teacher after becoming more involved in anti-racist education. Through this series of open ended questions, stories were gathered that provided insight into what factors or conditions had led these teachers into a professional organization focused on anti-racist anti-oppressive education. Teachers also shared what they were hoping to learn, or contribute to SAFE.

Data Analysis

The data used for this study were coded according to methods described by Kathy Charmaz (2006) in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* and by Melanie Birks and Jane Mills (2011) in *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide*. The first step in grounded theory methods is called initial coding which involves naming what is being said in the interview transcripts. This beginning phase of work is conducted to provide an

understanding of what is happening in the data, and as such the initial codes are rooted firmly in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz cites the work of Strauss (1978) and recommends the use of gerunds in initial coding to keep the codes action-oriented and process focused. It is in this stage that the researcher must be constantly aware of him/herself and the decisions that are being made (Birks & Mills, 2011) so as to not force the data into a preconceived framework. In this stage, I was able to begin to understand why the participants joined SAFE and what they hoped to learn. A sample of some of my initial codes include: seeking professionalism, wanting connections, rejecting meritocracy, seeking courage, needing support, looking for change, thinking critically, experiencing racism, hoping for growth, identifying problems, feeling isolated, wanting resources, building relationships, increasing knowledge.

The second stage of coding is called focused coding which involves taking the most significant or frequent initial codes and finding and deciding which of those make the most analytical sense. In this way, categories begin to emerge. Larger segments of data are analyzed and make creating categories more likely. It is in this stage that comparisons begin to emerge from interview to interview (Charmaz, 2006). One of the most important tasks in focused coding is the connections that are made between each of the categories. In order to do this, the researcher is constantly comparing the data, the categories, and other less significant categories. This is a stage of asking questions of the relationships that are beginning to emerge (Birks & Mills, 2011). It was within this stage that I began to compare interview to interview to determine the most common themes and incidents from my data.

According to Straus and Corbin (1998), as cited in Charmaz's book, axial coding is the important third stage but Birks & Mills keep axial coding within the second stage. Regardless of whether one views it as the end of stage two or as a separate stage three the work is important

and a necessary step. Axial coding is the process through which the data is essentially put back together in new ways after the initial coding is complete. This is accomplished through making connections between the more developed categories that emerged during focused coding and as such it is very closely connected to focussed coding. "The purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open [Initial] coding" (Charmaz, 2006, p 60). It is the goal of linking relationships between categories and subcategories and finding ways that they are related.

Memo Writing

Memo-writing is an essential part of the analytical process in using grounded theory methods as it provides a way to engage closely with the data and the evolving codes and categories. Writing memos allows you to "stop and analyze your ideas about the codes in any – and every – way that occurs to you during the moment" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Memos were written and developed through the coding phase in order to keep me grounded in the data and to give more strength to the analytical codes that were developed. This process provided a means for me to remain engaged in the data, to ask questions of my codes, categories, and the relationships between categories, "In working with the data, the researcher extracts meaning using a process of interpretation. Memoing enables you to articulate, explore, and question these interpretations as you engage with the data" (Birks et al., 2008 in Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 40). As a result, many of the memos remained open until the end of the data analysis to provide flexibility in being able to move back and forth through the data until the very end.

The importance of memo-writing lies in the fact that they are essentially a way of record keeping for the researcher. It provides a place to record any thoughts, questions, areas of concern and further research, and ideas that arise throughout the research process. It is the "most

significant factor in ensuring quality in grounded theory" (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 40). Without memos, it is easy to become lost in the data and to lose sight of the goals of the research.

Charmaz provides strategies for memo-writing emphasizing the need to find a system that works for the researcher. She gives information about two prewriting techniques that can be used to get started into memo-writing with more ease. These are clustering and free-writing (Charmaz, 2006). Following the guidance of Charmaz, I began this process by using free-writing and then found myself utilizing clustering as well. Free-writing involves putting aside a set amount of time, such as ten minutes, to write freely about whatever comes to mind. It helped to get me writing and was a tool to put my thoughts down on paper. Charmaz recommends that once you are comfortable with free-writing that you try a focused free-write that centers around specific data, codes, or categories.

When I began to write memos, I used more of a journaling format simply using Microsoft Word. However, it very quickly became clear that an organization system would assist in keeping the memos sorted and stored well. Therefore, I started using the memo feature in NVivo 9, and this software was also used to assist in my focused coding of the data. While I regularly used NVivo 9 for these purposes, I would also continuously supplement with handwritten jot notes and diagrams to help me visualize and conceptualize the themes that were emerging, as well as the relationships between these themes. I did not keep a formal journal that outlines my research journey from start to finish; instead I have stacks of memos and jot notes that provide essential insights into my thoughts and experiences throughout. I noticed that initially my memos were more like journal entries - comments about anything that came to mind or stood out for me in the data I was coding. Eventually, I was able to pull significant bits of information

from these beginning memos and start to write more refined memos that were focused on specific categories and themes.

For example, when I first began writing memos I would write about more generalized events or moments that stood out for me as I worked through the transcripts, such as how one participant focused on how to improve learning:

> She believes a person needs to feel welcome and accepted in order to learn. She also brings up a good point when she says that if someone doesn't feel welcomed and accepted then what investment do they have in being a good citizen? If being able to learn is contingent on feeling a sense of belonging then within education that should be a goal to strive towards; ensuring that students feel a sense of belonging.

Later on in the research process, my memos become more focused and drew connections between other participants and their ideas.

> All participants speak directly about wanting to change something or take action in some way. For example, changing educational structures to be more inclusive, having less barriers, including more perspectives and minority histories, taking action to work towards an anti-racist framework. They see SAFE as having a role in this work, as a way to bring people together, to share common experiences and knowledge. They speak of backgrounds/life experiences that changed the way they viewed and interpreted the role of education.

In this memo, it is evident that emerging ideas are being developed and refined. I believe this particular excerpt from this memo was the catalyst that led to the eventual emergence of the final themes.

Through these stages of coding and writing memos, as shown in the above examples, I was able to eventually map out a description of the reasons that teachers seek out professional organizations centred on anti-racist education, and what they were hoping to learn from such organizations. As time progressed, and I was acquiring more fluency and skill in grounded theory methods, I became increasingly attuned to the importance of representing the data accurately. Often I would ask myself if the participants would be satisfied with how I was representing their stories, and was ever mindful of how they would react to reading my findings. As a result, I have used many quotes from the participants themselves in my findings chapter. These direct quotes are presented as a way to tie together actual statements of what the participants were saying and the themes that emerged as the data was analyzed. I appreciated the feedback of my advisor as I worked through sorting and organizing these themes. This data analysis portion of this research study took the longest to be completed.

Ethics

As my study involved human subjects and interactions, ethic approval was required by the University of Saskatchewan to ensure the safety and protection of my participants. Given the nature of the study, there was minimal risk to participants. Their identities have been protected through removing any identifying information and they were assigned a number through the data findings. An ethics application was approved on November 10, 2010. Interviewees reviewed and signed a consent form (see appendix C) to participate in the study, which outlined how their anonymity would be protected, and how the data would be stored.

Conclusion

Grounded theory was used for this study as it provides a way for research to begin from the responses of the participants, and move to a thematic approach of organizing the data. In using this methodology, I was able to locate themes and identify the relationships that tied the themes together. Critical race theory with a decolonizing focus as the lens for analyzing the data was selected as this can be used as a strategy that can work towards eliminating racism and other forms of oppression in education. The goal was to discover the reasons teachers became involved in the SAFE forum. I wanted to hear directly from teachers their reasons for being involved in SAFE, and understand to what extent perceptions of race and racism have influenced these teachers to want to work towards social justice in education.

Chapter Five: Data Findings

When I began this research journey, I was interested in knowing why teachers were involved in anti-racist education. I had spent considerable time reading and learning about decolonization, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, anti-racism, and studies of Whiteness. I had read much of the research that investigated pre-service teachers, and the resistance that many encountered when learning about complicity in issues of racism and oppression. I learned about common discourses, such as meritocracy and colour-blindness, that maintained the status quo and allowed people to believe that race does not matter anymore and that the only determinant of one's 'lot in life' was directly connected to how hard one worked, leaving it as the responsibility of the individual rather than holding institutional structures and systemic racism accountable. Then, I got to witness first hand some of this resistance when I had the opportunity to teach a course at the University of Saskatchewan called *First Nations and Cross Cultural Education* which is a class designed to challenge students to consider how knowledge is socially constructed, how differences operate to maintain the status quo, and their participation in racism and to recognize the role of White privilege.

Through these experiences, I started to wonder why some people got involved in anti-racist work. How were some able to move beyond the resistance and become allies to those who are racially marginalized or oppressed? What made it possible for some people to identify, understand, and eventually work to challenge inequality in our society? I wondered what factors helped these people not only to recognize their role in inequality, but also to choose to work towards making this world a better place by focusing their efforts on eliminating injustice. When I became familiar with a new organization called the Social Justice and Anti-Racist Anti-Oppressive Forum on Education (SAFE), I became immediately curious to discover what led

these teachers to become members of this forum. My underlying goal in conducting this research was to discover what these factors and conditions are so that more opportunities can be created to inspire others to become involved as well. If we know what inspires teachers to become involved in anti-racism and what they are hoping to learn, then this information has the potential to be quite useful in programming decisions and in finding ways to encourage others to get involved as well.

Through analyzing and coding my interviews, I discovered five key categories, or themes, that led these teachers to become members of SAFE and what they were hoping to learn from, or contribute to SAFE. These are:

1. Networking opportunities with like-minded people, to learn from, and have support.
2. Witnessing or experiencing racism or oppression, and wanting to prevent these from reoccurring.
3. Being self-reflective, critical thinkers.
4. Wanting to learn how to make resources and classrooms safe and inclusive.
5. Wanting to learn how to challenge racism and oppression in a solution and action oriented approach.

Teachers were seeking tools that could help them improve their teaching practice and enhance their classroom materials. I considered this to be directly connected to their professional growth as teachers. Another theme was more personal, and connected to learning strategies on how to effectively challenge or respond when they witness something racist or oppressive happening, whether it be in their classroom, their school, or in other aspects of their lives. Most teachers could imagine sharing their own learning journey and experiences with new teachers, in a mentorship capacity as a way they could contribute to SAFE.

Theme One: Networking opportunities with like-minded people, to learn from and have support.

The teachers expressed a desire to be in a learning community of like-minded people where they could hear about what others were doing in their classrooms, and gain ideas for themselves in their own teaching practice. They valued the opportunity to have a forum where they could network with others, to have support, to learn from each other and acquire feedback. They appreciated and looked forward to the prospect of being able to develop relationships with other like-minded people. Some teachers sought out SAFE in order to increase their sense of credibility through belonging to this organization. For these teachers, SAFE was viewed as a way to increase their credibility when challenging racism or oppression and as such SAFE was seen as a way to increase their courage.

The first area within this category is the opportunity to be in a learning community and have access to resources. The prospect of learning from one another was a condition that lead the participants to become members of SAFE. It rests on a desire to have access to a strong learning community where they can hear what other teachers are doing and gain ideas for themselves in their own teaching practice. They are seeking the opportunity to have discussions about specific classroom resources, and to have a forum where they can present any challenges they are experiencing and learn what others are doing:

> I think what I hope for the most from SAFE and other similar forums is an area where I can hear what other people are doing, how they are doing it, and how I can apply that, and ask for help. Where I can get positive or productive feedback. (P1)

> ...that would give me an opportunity to see new ideas and new teaching techniques and somebody that's tried it that liked it that maybe would give me another direction to come in at, I guess, another idea. (P4)

> For people to do something or try something, to test something out and share their experiences, whether or not it worked and suggestions for how to go about trying it. (P3)

> SAFE...is a group of like-minded teachers who have a common goal and purpose. Who have expertise, who have knowledge, hopefully who have resources, who can work together, who can share ideas and materials, learning, knowledge, energy, everything to promote change on a broader scale. (P3)

Discussions with others leads to sharing ideas and learning from each other, and this was described as a highly valuable part of why teachers wanted to become involved in SAFE. The desire to include multiple perspectives and different materials into the curriculum, and learning how to do this effectively also motivated some to want to be a part of a learning community.

> But I would like the opportunity to have workshops with other Art and English teachers to share ideas about how to use things, how they can be more effectively used. How could different perceptions about what is happening with this particular thing be included. (P1)

> So I am attempting to get as many different viewpoints on the same topic as possible...So I have tried to collect a few good anthologies for short stories and poetry

and what not from as many different nationalities as I can that can support the curriculum that's now in place with as many different viewpoints as possible. (P4)

It's a way for me to keep myself updated to what different kinds of discourses I could be engaging in, and what different kinds of materials, and what different perceptions I could be bringing alongside whatever it is I am already talking about. (P1)

Seeking a community of people to learn from is also a way to combat isolation, particularly in rural divisions. In describing her experience of finding good resources in a rural division one teacher says,

when you are kind of the lone voice in a division of how many teachers - it's hard to say I'm wanting to go in this direction, do you have anything that can help me? So you kind of get a little isolated when you are in a rural division I guess. (P4)

Feeling isolated, this teacher was seeking the networking opportunities that SAFE provides as she looked for guidance and support in her classroom resources.

Wanting help and looking for advice on how to change things that teachers had identified as problematic was another reason for seeking out a network of people. For one teacher, there was uncertainty in knowing how to make changes when issues of racism and oppression had been identified,

So I need help in knowing what I can do to make changes. (P5)

And I think something has to change but I don't know how. So I am looking for advice, support. (P5)

The second area within this networking with others category is the significance of SAFE in relationship building, supporting one another, and working together. In sharing their perceptions about networking, teachers were fond of any opportunities to build meaningful relationships with others and to have support from others:

> It's a chance to share, to hear people speak, to share your questions and comments, to meet over lunch, to meet over coffee, to meet in those discussion groups and afterwards network and connect....I hope the more often we meet the same sort of people, familiar faces around the table you get to know one another and maybe that's when you begin to collaborate, begin to do things together. (P2)

> I think I need to be more connected and this isn't just a one day conference that's going to answer all my questions. This has to be an ongoing quest for me, to find answers and to be with other people and to spend time with like-minded people because I am learning as well. (P5)

> ...just from that day at the conference that it was a great opportunity to talk to people from different backgrounds, different experiences. I would hope that is what it's (SAFE) it going to be about. (P5)

> ...we need to connect, we need to create community....people need the opportunity to share. And maybe we share over what we are doing in our classroom, maybe we come together around a book, or a film and we have a discussion after that. But I think that's where the fire is fed you know, by that learning community. (P2)

One teacher recognized the challenges that come along with challenging racism and oppression and stated that the work becomes more achievable when there is a larger group of people to turn to,

> ...you need more people, you need more advocates and allies because racism and oppression are powerful forces and it's hard for one person to try and conquer them in 6 hours a day for 180 days or what you have. I think it would be great to have that group of people that you can fall back on, and learn from, and learn with. (P3)

Another teacher spoke about what can happen when people are provided with a chance to connect one on one. For this teacher, change begins to happen when a relationship is nurtured,

> We need to tell other people about our experiences and our students' experiences and somehow get the word out there. And it is really amazing when people meet one on one, things really change because then we understand each other as people. (P5)

Relationship building takes time and effort, as one teacher pointed out it takes more than meeting once or twice a year,

> I think there needs to be more opportunities for conversation whether we have a virtual community you know, whether we meet together once a month even just for drinks and conversation but we need to connect, we need to create a community. I don't think that happens twice a year, it needs to be more than that because people need the opportunity to share. (P2)

Another teacher, focused on learning about action projects and classroom activities that can help make anti-racism more practical, expressed a desire to meet more frequently in order to achieve this,

> Classroom activities, classroom teaching, action projects that students are doing, anything that has a demonstrable impact on racism, and the way racism is handled in schools and in the community. To me that is the most important thing. I mean like this anti-racism is hard to explain to people, but if we could just show people, or do stuff rather than just learn stuff or teach stuff I think maybe we can have an impact. I think it is just the networking and sharing so let`s get an online forum going and let`s start having some more regular meetings and stuff like that you know even social events, opportunities for the members to get together and share their ideas and experiences and things like that. (P3)

For this teacher, learning the theory of anti-racism and anti-oppression is important, but what is more important is learning what to do about it in a practical and action-oriented way with students.

Most teachers recognized how difficult fighting racism and oppression can be and valued the presence and support of other like minded people who were facing similar struggles. The support, discussions, feedback, and learning can provide a sense of strength that keeps them motivated in their work. They recognized the ongoing nature of relationship building - that it takes time to develop - and that it is a necessary step in facilitating collaborative work and understanding.

The last area within this networking with others category is looking at the credibility and courage that a network of people can provide for some teachers. The perceptions of their participation in SAFE in this regard can be described as wanting the support of an organization to increase their courage and credibility when responding to issues of racism and oppression.

This extends to using their membership in SAFE as a way to promote the work of SAFE and possibility attract more people to get involved.

> The networking opportunities I thought would be very valuable and I think it sets an example for other educators as well. The more you can spread the word, I mean it's one thing to do it in your classroom with the door closed but if you are part of an organization then people might ask you about it and you can promote it and stuff like that and hopefully widen the circle so to speak. (P3)

For another teacher, she took comfort in having the support of a whole group of people within an organization. In describing how she would respond to a racist or oppressive comment or action she says,

> But I want it to come across as very professional and that I have the research to support me, or that I have the support of a whole organization saying this isn't right. I think that might help me feel stronger. That's what I am looking for....That it`s not just me saying it, but that there are other people who are saying it too. And maybe I will feel more courageous then. (P5)

This teacher is seeking credibility that she believes comes along with having a membership in an organization like SAFE.

Networking opportunities were one of the most commonly coded pieces of the transcripts, and as such it is a significant motivator for people to become involved in SAFE. It is clear that teachers are seeking the opportunity to learn from one another, and that they view discussions and sharing ideas as significant in this process. They want the chance to talk to other

teachers and hear what others are doing in their classrooms. They want the opportunity to build relationships with other like-minded people, and see this as a source of much needed support.

Theme Two: Witnessing or Experiencing racism or oppression, and wanting to prevent these from reoccurring.

Throughout the interview process, the participants shared personal stories of incidents of racism or oppression that they had either experienced or had witnessed. These stories were told with much detail and played a major role in being a catalyst for these teachers to want to make changes within education. In sharing these stories, teachers were connecting personal life experiences to the changes that they wish to see in the future and this was a major motivating factor for them becoming involved in the Social Justice and Anti-Racist Anti-Oppressive Forum on Education. What it was that they had witnessed or experienced was what they were seeking to rectify or change in education. The intent of this sharing was to demonstrate the role that racism and oppression had played in their lives, and to identify what changes these teachers wanted to make.

Teachers who witnessed racism or oppression in their lives spoke about these incidents, how they were affected by it, and how it motivated them to want to work towards making a change.

> My parents were firmly entrenched in the 50's and 40's and the first boyfriend that I had was First Nations and they flipped. Because that's the way they were raised - that's what they were taught...so I wanted to make sure that I taught my children differently and I taught everybody's children that I had differently. And I was hoping that SAFE was going to give me that extra edge to be able to deliver my own beliefs. (P4)

Witnessing the racism, and not agreeing with the racist attitudes of her parents, this teacher was committed to ensuring that she worked towards promoting her beliefs in her children and in her students. Another teacher identified how oppressive practices were operating in the lives of her students through placement and language testing,

> Well one of the really big issues for us is testing. Placement testing, language testing - this is an extremely oppressive act. And I think this is very much for First Nations kids because they are still being evaluated with tests that are made by White, middle-class, well educated people living in a very different situation. (P5)

> So these are the things to me that are very oppressive and people just don't think about it. So how do I bring that to peoples' attention? When my students are being given tests that make huge choices for their future. (P5)

> And I'm not sure if all these rules have been set up specifically to keep immigrant and refugee people out of school, but it does create a barrier....It just creates so many barriers and so much stress and financial difficulty for people. (P5)

Recognizing the role of testing in the programming decisions of her students, this teacher spoke about finding a way to have her students' voices heard and becoming a meaningful advocate for her students. She had identified an oppressive practice within education, but is now seeking advice on how to make changes,

> So I guess my challenge, what I need to learn is what can I do about this? I see there's a problem, but what do I do? .... But I feel like I have to help get my students' voices out there. It's not just my voice, it's their voices that need to be heard....But me as one

> person, I don't know what to do. I don't know how to handle it. So how can I be an advocate to my students in a purposeful way? (P5)

She has learned a lot from listening to her students, and believes that through having more people listen to them more learning and understanding could occur,

> Some of them have had very tough lives and they say things that are so powerful and have such an impact on me that I am thinking that other people would probably have the same experience if they had a chance to hear what these kids say. (P5)

From these two teachers, being a witness to racist or oppressive behaviours or practices was a defining moment that spurred the desire to act differently and work towards changing what they had witnessed.

For teachers who had directly experienced racism or oppression, they also spoke about how this affected them, and how it had motivated them to want to make changes within education.

> Part of it came from when I was growing up and not understanding what was going on. I knew I was not like you and you and you....So in some ways that was the turning point for me, recognizing that I am not exactly an insider. That there was something just slightly off, that's not bad, but it explained why I am not like you or you or you. (P1)

> We are not represented, and that's partially why I wanted to do my masters too. Because there is not one single resource or moment or book or image that I can think of that I saw depicting a same sex couple....Schools can be very harsh and unwelcoming places. I want to combat that in a lot of ways. (P1)

For this teacher, lack of positive representations for same sex relationships impacted his desire to change the way these issues are talked about in schools,

> I wanted to talk about heteronormativity and all of these kinds of things and how queer people are portrayed in the media and in daily life and how they are understood and talked about in schools and how that can be harmful. (P1)

The goal for this teacher revolves around changing negative perceptions of homosexual people, how they are depicted, and how schools can become more welcoming places.

Two teachers shared stories of direct experiences with racism both in their personal lives and in their own experiences attending school. Reflecting back on his own schooling this teacher says,

> Well, I think definitely the class...in my undergrad would have been the light bulb moment, but it turned on the light bulb to all these experiences I had had up till that point that I didn't yet understand. Like realizing why I didn't get much out of my own education and just thinking more critically about some of the things that people and teachers had said to me over the years. And wanting to make sure that didn't happen again....I've got an entire K-12 education wherein I saw nothing of myself in the learning. And I didn't notice it at the time, but I do now and I think it is extremely damaging to a person's identity to go through something like that...and now I am motivated to make a change. (P3)

Realizing how his own education had fallen short for him, he acknowledges how curriculum can be geared towards only the dominant culture,

> It was just me and a sea of White kids and White teachers and that's all we learned about was White things....in all the literature we read and every lesson there was never any mention of a single Black accomplishment or a Black person. (P3)

Discussion also revolved around troubling school practices that turned slavery into an activity of laughter, and how these activities continue to take place within schools,

> When slavery ever came up - I remember one class, it wasn't my class, but my friends were in this class, the teacher taught about slavery, so he had a slave auction at the school where all the kids in the class got to be auctioned off for fun and they would have to be your slave for the day and I don't think anyone learned about slavery through that. I mean it was a ridiculous farce of an event where everyone was laughing and joking and if I had been in the place mentally where I am now I would have raised an issue with that and interestingly at one of the schools that I was teaching at they wanted to do the same thing. So I finally did speak up - I thought this was my chance to finally redeem myself and so they renamed it the 'Student Auction'....so these are the things that continue to motivate me to change what goes on in classrooms. (P3)

Identifying where education had failed him, and witnessing school activities that are harmful to understanding minority histories and experiences, this teacher is continually motivated to make changes. The other teacher also shared many of her experiences with racism and what can happen when someone has experienced racism,

> But either way I just thought when you have faced racism or oppression of any sort, truly, honestly you don't want anyone else to face it. (P2)

> I can empathize. I know what it's like to be treated without dignity. (P2)

She described her own experiences attending school and shared her adjustment to learning about Saskatoon, the role that racism plays in the city, and what she decided to do with her observations. She begins by describing her experiences helping out a classmate but receiving no credit for her efforts,

> ...but staying up with her all night with her to help her with the presentation and her just presenting it but never giving any credit. And of course the White professor figuring that she was the smart one you know, just assuming all sorts of things. And I got tired of those assumptions and so having experienced you know gentler and harsher racism... (P2)

About living in Saskatoon she says,

> I have never seen a city that's so divided....So I think the realization that racism was alive in the city in a really overt way, not a covert way, was really eye-opening for me....and so I thought, once I got over realizing what the city was about, I felt I needed, if I was going to live here, I needed to be a part of something positive. (P2)

Experiencing racism directly has lead this teacher to want involvement in something positive, and to work towards making sure those experiences are not replicated for others. Identifying the damaging effects of racism has lead these teachers to want to make a difference in the lives of other people, so that they do not have to endure things similar to what they have experienced.

There is a second part of this theme that needs to be included within this discussion of identifying personal experiences as reasons for involvement with SAFE. The teachers were asked to consider what they believed were personal or systemic challenges that prevent people from engaging in anti-racist anti-oppressive education. They were asked this question in order to find out what they believed most strongly prevent people from becoming involved with anti-

racist anti-oppressive education. In the responses, it became clear that these teachers talked about common discourses that are utilized to maintain the status quo and prevent people from questioning how inequality is sustained.

The first of these discourses mentioned was meritocracy and how the belief in this can prevent people from understanding the systemic racism that is held intact.

> So many Canadians say to me 'just encourage your students to make the best of their opportunities in Canada, and if they just work really hard they will have a good life'. And it seems to me that, on average, Canadians in general, and even some of my colleagues don't really understand what barriers are in place for kids when they come here. (P5)

> That when they are not successful in school it looks like they have failed and it's not the system that doesn't work, it's the person. (P5)

These are popular discourses that people can use to minimize the structural barriers in education, by believing in and supporting meritocracy. Blame then, is placed on the individual, rather than the institution, and it becomes the responsibility of the individual to adapt and fit into the education system.

A second discourse that emerged through the interviews was the denial that racism exists, or that it matters. This connects to the idea of colour-blindness, that to acknowledge racism is racist behaviour and the belief that if 'I am not racist, then I do not need to learn about racism'. These were categorized as systemic challenges that prevent people from participating in anti-racist and anti-oppressive education.

> White Canadians don't want to believe that racism exists. So if they don't even believe it exists there's no point for dialogue. And then when the dialogue begins they feel like

> they are being blamed and then there's no dialogue....I think the agenda is about disbelief so it's non-existent and then if we make the effort to points things out then we're being aggressive or we're making them feel bad.... (P2)

> ...but dealing with students who have been raised in a society that almost completely fails to acknowledge of the oppressed can be a real obstacle...it takes a lot, especially when it is ingrained and learned almost by osmosis - that everyone is equal in our society and race doesn't matter and this whole colour blindness fad that came out in the 90's - I think has been the single most damaging thing for anti-racist education...People, young people these days, think that even to acknowledge race is racist behaviour and it has really complicated things. (P3)

In talking about forums like SAFE, one teacher says,

> I think people are less likely to come to these forums if they don't see a problem. But it's at these forums that they do realize there's a problem. So unless you go you aren't exposed to how the things you are doing are problematic. (P1)

If people believe they are not racist, then there is no point for learning about racism. These people think that racism is only about individual and intentional malicious acts.

> Because the perception is that what they are talking about I don't have to deal with because I am not racist. (P1)

It is the denial that racism exists, the beliefs that everyone is equal, and that race does not matter anymore that can prevent people from becoming involved in anti-racist education.

Personal challenges that prevent people from participating include recognizing the role of White privilege in their lives,

> Well it is a huge challenge and I guess as a White person it's so easy for me to just walk away because I don't have to face it. You know, I could take the coward's way out and just walk away. But I think that I don't want to do that. I want to be an advocate for my students, all students. (P5)

There is also an element of questioning one's personal agenda which this teacher connects to White privilege,

> Being Black there is a sort of nervousness that comes with constantly promoting anti-racist ideas, initiatives, plans, because you get the impression that people will think you have some kind of personal agenda. For instance, this year I taught the book of Negros instead of the Stone Angel and the students, who like to joke, said...'oh, we're just doing this because you are Black'...if you take a White educator those suspicions wouldn't be there if the person is inclined towards anti-racist pedagogy. (P3)

In conclusion, when asked what led them towards anti-racist anti-oppressive education, all teachers shared stories of either identifying oppressive practices or experiencing racism or oppression, and wanting to change these in their own classrooms. The lengths to which some teachers described these events and how it had impacted them certainly adds to significance it had in their lives, and in motivating them towards forums like SAFE where they can be engaged in something positive.

Theme Three: Being self-reflective, critical thinkers.

Throughout the interviews, this idea of being self-reflective kept emerging as something that kept them engaged and wanting to learn more about how to improve their teaching methods and resources, and how this could help them grow as people. What I mean by self-reflective is the ability to stop and critically reflect on a thought or an action and then to determine the effect of that particular thought or action to decide if it should be repeated or not. When asked how they perceive themselves growing as teachers since becoming more involved in anti-racist anti-oppressive education, the most common responses included being receptive to change, and constantly challenging and evaluating their teaching practice. Others used this critical thinking as a way to help them stop and think about what they were doing and how they could make improvements in their actions towards others.

Teacher knowledge, a factor listed in the research question, seems to play a huge role in motivating them towards SAFE in the sense that the learning they experienced in their studies helped develop a level of consciousness within them to be more reflective and critical. Four of the teachers had completed or were currently in graduate studies, and one had been a member of a social and ecological justice cohort in her teacher training. The knowledge they acquired through their studies made them more critically aware of the world in which they live, and their role within it.

> I think definitely the class in my undergrad.....realizing why I didn't get as much out of my own education and just thinking more critically about some of the things that people and teachers had said to me over the years. (P3)

> And it's like these kinds of materials I have been studying had led me to stop and think about what I am looking at in terms of how I am going to use the resources, how I am

> going to choose them, and how I am going to present them, and how to talk about them. Instead of just looking at it in terms of content, but also just look at the potential effect of these materials. (P1)

> Well, for me I think going to graduate school was a huge awakening....It was such an awakening for me, such a changing and empowering time for me that I think once you've seen what it can do for you, you want to introduce others to it. (P2)

When asked why he became involved in anti-racist anti-oppressive education, this teacher made reference to his university course work, particularly the EDFT 335 course where he was confronted with how he was benefiting from colonialism and how he had believed in meritocracy. This teacher accredited his ability to be self reflective as a major factor for him,

> I think it was me stopping and thinking. And that sounds really funny but I don't think a lot of people stop and think about what they are doing or about how they are engaging with people, or about how they are engaging themselves in the world. (P1)

The importance of being able to stop and reflect about the consequences of your beliefs, thoughts, or actions was echoed by other teachers,

> ...to get people to stop and question what they are doing because I don't think that people often think that they are racist or that they are being oppressive, but they are doing things and not really thinking about the consequences to other people. (P5)

> So I think everything in my life and everything I ever experienced has lead me to always stop and evaluate. (P1)

> Things are constantly changing. Lifelong learning is the popular term that is used. I prefer to think about it as constantly challenging what you are doing so that it stays relevant. (P1)

> I think it reminds me to be reflective in my teaching....Hopefully I will be a constant learner. (P2)

This critical reflection also shifted into talking about recognizing personal challenges, making changes, and being open and willing to do the work necessary to make a change,

> ...it's critically evaluating my perceptions and how I am engaging with people with resources and what I choose to focus on and how I go about things. So critically evaluating what I am doing from my positionality... (P1)

> The trick is when I recognize that I am doing something that is problematic that I stop and think about how I can change that practice. (P1)

> I will say something or do something and it's not really a very correct way of thinking but we do just get so used to doing things all the time and we don't think about what we say or do. So it's always a challenge for me to be more mindful, to think and to learn so I am happy to be challenged. (P5)

> Well, I think I am becoming a better human being in a lot of ways and I really think that teaching is about being a human being....When you evaluate whatever oppression you are

> taking on, you change your worldview a little bit. So I really think that how people teach and what they think is valuable is based on their worldview. If your worldview changes, what you talk about, what you bring up also changes. (P1)

> I'm hoping that it, as a person first before a teacher that it will help me to examine some of the concepts that I was taught. Always question, going from everything from walking down the street and seeing someone that's different in some way from me - to examining what my gut reaction is to that person. If I read a piece of literature, questioning what is said in that literature, or looking at the curriculum as a teacher saying, why, why is that necessary? So I would hope being a part of SAFE...that it will continue to make me question what I am teaching, what I am thinking, what I'm feeling, how I'm responding. (P4)

Another teacher expressed that though there is work that needs to be done with others, there is also work within ourselves that needs to be done,

> ...our work isn't only outward focused but inward focused... (P2)

This particular teacher had completed a masters degree focused on transformative education, and she talked about the need to be deeply connected to what you are learning in order for it to be meaningful and transformative,

> ...like how can you take someone to a place you've never been. I think that's the answer to transformative education piece. If you haven't been transformed by learning, how will you ever believe that somebody else could be? How will you even teach in such a way that it is possible? ...I think you need to be transformed by learning in order to believe in it and want to impart that. (P2)

Teachers also expressed a propensity towards being comfortable with not knowing all the answers all the time and in taking risks. In talking about how racism is handled in schools, one teacher said,

> I think that's why a lot of teachers don't touch it with a ten foot pole either because they are just scared to say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing. So we have to change that. (P3)

> I was surprised but you know I think there are teachers here and there that are taking chances....and I thought good for that teacher. (P2)

> we need to comfort those that need it, and shake the ones that need to be made uncomfortable. That's where I am hoping SAFE and STARS keeps me. Uncomfortable. (P4)

For these teachers, engaging in critical self reflection and being highly self aware was a motivating factor that kept them involved in learning more about anti-racist and anti-oppressive education. For some, they attributed their ability to be self-reflective to their graduate studies and the knowledge they acquired through this schooling. In order to change what they viewed as racist or oppressive actions, they valued the ability to stop, question, and evaluate what they were doing both in their personal and professional lives; as people and as teachers. They appreciated being challenged, taking risks, and recognized that not everyone takes the time to engage in this process of self-reflection. As these teachers pointed out, being critical thinkers is a necessary part of being able to identify and challenge racist and oppressive practices.

Theme Four: Wanting to learn how to make resources and classrooms safe and inclusive.

Teachers expressed a desire to learn about classroom resources as a way to improve their teaching practice, which includes how to effectively include multiple perspectives in the curriculum and how to make the curriculum more relevant to the lives of students,

> I was hoping that we could have discussions about different pieces of literature and different resources and so on and so forth. (P 4)

> knowledge on how to develop the materials that I am using in a way that develops context...to give it meaning and make it relevant. (P1)

This last teacher shared a story about how he interprets what it means to him to give the material more context and make it more meaningful and relevant. He used a reading activity that was based on an Aboriginal story as a way to demonstrate how this could have been more than just a reading comprehension exercise; it could have been reading for meaning as well,

> That story felt really tokenized in some ways because it's one out of three that have a very specific Aboriginal focus in that booklet, but it's not given meaningful context. With the curriculum having Aboriginal content, but it's not just that. It's about being put into classrooms and having it presented in a way that is not cheapening or tokenizing. (P1)

Learning how to make their classrooms as safe and inclusive as possible through their teaching and the materials they choose was also expressed by some teachers.

> I hope to learn how my teaching methods and how the resources I use, and how the classroom I build can be as inclusive and safe as possible. Where students will feel

> welcome, where nobody will feel judged and where there's an outreach to the community.... (P1)
>
> We have to learn to accept each other and meet people as people and everyone needs to feel welcomed and invested in making this a good community...So anything I could take back to school would be great. We call our classroom the department of peace so we really promote understanding and we are always trying to reach out into the school. (P5)
>
> And especially because gay and lesbian students are very alienated and isolated being able to read something validating could mean the difference between life and death literally. So I think we need to take that more seriously. (P2)

Teachers want to learn how to make their classrooms safe and inclusive, which includes finding materials that bring in the experiences of the marginalized and the oppressed; those which are often absent in mainstream curriculum. As one teacher pointed out, there are a growing amount of resources for Aboriginal content but less for minority people,

> I find there are a number of resources lately in terms of...incorporating more First Nations content and perspectives in lessons. So I think there is a growing wealth of resources there for teachers and not so much for other cultural groups. (P3)

Building a sense of community where everyone feels welcomed and represented in the curriculum was a shared goal for many of these teachers.

Some teachers also expressed a desire to learn how to strengthen their own knowledge of anti-racist and anti-oppressive education. For those who had never taken classes on anti-racist

education, they welcomed guidance or advice on readings they should study. One teacher, in acknowledging that anti-oppressive education piece was missing from her research and her knowledge base, inquired into what kinds of things she should be reading,

> Well I am really hoping I can take the summer class next time...I am just looking for anything at this point, if you have any suggestions, anything that I should be reading that I should know. (P5)

> I guess I need more resources to start thinking about what I need to learn. (P5)

Another teacher expressed the same desire to learn more about anti-racist anti-oppressive education,

> A reading list because just in terms of personal learning, I don't know where to start. Because it's a long time ago that I was in the faculty of education, and I'm a bit far away from that, it would be nice to know what's out there. And it's always nice to know what the seminal works are... (P2)

These teachers, although having completed masters degrees, are seeking to learn more about anti-racist and anti-oppressive theory through reading some of the seminal scholars in this field.

Theme Five: Wanting to learn how to challenge racism and oppression in a solution and action oriented approach.

This last theme encompassed the desire to learn how to make changes in a solution-based and action-oriented approach. The responses here ranged from wanting to learn how to be an advocate from a White perspective, how to effectively challenge racism and oppression in a solution-based way, and how to make anti-racist education more real in the classroom. One teacher was committed to learning strategies to confront people in a proactive and non-

confrontational way. She spoke of watching people do this successfully and expressed a desire to be able to emulate that approach,

> ...but I would also like to know, or build my confidence to be able to say, when somebody makes a comment or says something - how do I handle that? How can I be an advocate in a way that's not confrontational? And I have seen people do that so skilfully and I would really like to be able to do that. I want to be able to have the courage to say... (P5)

This teacher wants to learn how to challenge people to think about what they have said without making them feel defensive. In this way, she is seeking a solution-based approach that does not shut down dialogue. Learning how to be an ally from a White perspective, which I interpret as someone who has not experienced racism, was also expressed as a desire from this teacher,

> Well, is there someone who can advise us on how to be an advocate? Some who has not experienced racism, for me, how can someone advise me on how to be a better advocate? (P5)

She wanted to learn about effective ways to be an advocate from someone who identified as White like her.

Another teacher expressed a desire to utilize an action-oriented approach in his teaching and in his classroom. He recognizes that when we learn about anti-racism we begin to understand why we want to do it, and wants to focus on the action piece that encompasses things he can do in his classroom that supports an anti-racist framework,

> The more we learn about it and discuss the theories we build up our rationale for it, we know why we want to do it, but it's more like but what are we going to do about it in a school with these kids on Monday...it's hard to make it real to students... (P3)

He is committed to working towards action and change with his students,

> But while I am teaching high school and working with these kids, my focus, and my goal would be action and change. And I know that people have to learn how the world works before they can change it so that will be a part of it but I really want to focus on the doing and the showing. (P3)

The desire to learn how to make anti-racism real in the classroom is the focus for this teacher, and he hopes this is something that can be supported through SAFE,

> And that's what I am always looking for and I am still hoping that I can find that through SAFE. (P3)

A third teacher spoke about striving towards a solution-based approach when faced with conversations about racism.

> And it was just all about how it was framed. I realized when I first approached him it was problem based, and you're the problem, versus here's a solution, what do you think? And all of a sudden his rough went down and he was okay....I'm torn because I think we need to call a spade a spade but as soon as we use the word racism, that in itself makes people shut down. (P2)

For this teacher, she concentrates on working towards finding solutions in a positive manner that brings positive results.

In this section, teachers were asked to consider what they would like to contribute to SAFE and these responses included sharing their own experiences and what knowledge they had acquired with other new teachers in a mentorship capacity. Their responses included passing along the information that they have learned to other teachers who may be at the beginning stages of their career, as well as providing an opportunity for others to hear about their own struggles and how they navigated through these. One teacher spoke about contributing what he learned and the tools he used to get started,

> I would eventually like to contribute. If I feel confident enough that I am doing a good job...for other people who are in my position now, ten years down the road to share what things I was dealing with and to share the ways and methods I used, and tools that I used to get me started in my teaching practice...Like mentorship... (P1)

Another shared a similar perspective, but included not only what she learned, but what she struggled with,

> I'd love to be able to come back and say, okay I was a first year teacher not that long ago...and this is what I found. This is what your struggles might be. This is where my struggles were. (P4)

Yet another teacher expressed a desire to find a way to have her students' voices heard in a forum like SAFE as she had been inspired by what they had taught her. She felt that having their voices heard would be more powerful than speaking for them.

> And to contribute, I guess to say about what I have learned from my EAL students, with immigrant and refugee kids and maybe have opportunities for my students to speak from themselves. I think that is more powerful than if I speak. (P5)

While all these teachers seemed focused on sharing their own experiences and what they had learned with others, one teacher was more specific on what he wanted to work towards in the future. For this teacher, he was seeking a way to make anti-racism and anti-oppression more real for other people and he found this through the power of spoken poetry.

> ...I am beginning to see a link between spoken poetry and anti-racism anti-oppression...I have seen the power of spoken word poetry in terms of getting to people's hearts and heads...So that's something I'll be working on moving forward. (P3)

In all these responses, teachers seemed committed to the desire to extend their knowledge and experiences to other teachers as a way to contribute to SAFE.

One teacher had a very unique perspective on what she hoped everyone could learn from belonging to SAFE, which no other participants addressed during their interviews. As a minority, she expressed a yearning for the discourse to be broadened beyond Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships and into including minority perspectives in anti-racist anti-oppressive discussions. Wanting acknowledgement of a shared struggle was a priority for this teacher,

> ...And I think that's what I would hope to gain is that we would realize that we share a struggle and that we are not against each other....And so I just really hope, my hope is that we work together and recognize that we share something... (P2)

She believes that, as more and more immigrants come to Saskatoon, if the conversations include minority perspectives that it could be a way to engage more people into anti-racist and anti-oppressive education,

> And as that grows I think there is an opportunity to engage and to broaden the discourse. That's what I would like to see and not just for my own self interests but for, I think the

> more engagement you have the more conversation the better. But recognizing that there are differences in the issues we are dealing with but there are also commonalities, and recognizing what we share... (P2)

In summary, teachers are hoping to learn ways to make their classrooms more safe and inclusive that involves providing a curriculum that is more representative of those that are marginalized or oppressed. As part of this work, some teachers are aware of their own limitations when it comes to understanding anti-racist and anti-oppressive theory and are seeking ways to increase their knowledge in this area. Teachers are also hoping to learn how create change through solution and action oriented approaches. In terms of what they would like to contribute, teachers spoke about the desire to share their experience, knowledge, and struggles with new teachers.

Conclusion

Through this research, the factors or conditions that lead teachers to become a part of SAFE became clear. Teachers want to be involved in SAFE for the networking and relationship building opportunities it can provide. SAFE can also provide learning opportunities for teachers to strengthen their own knowledge of anti-racist and anti-oppressive theory, to gain confidence and credibility in challenging racism and oppression, as well as learning how to make their classrooms and resources more effective and relevant to the lives of all students. SAFE also provides the opportunity for teachers to learn how to promote action and effect change, and the ability to be self-reflective was highly valued in this process.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The purpose of my research was to learn about the factors or conditions that lead teachers to become involved in the Social Justice and Anti-Racist Anti-Oppressive Forum on Education (SAFE) and what they were hoping to learn or contribute to SAFE. However, the resulting five themes that emerged from my research were not organized as such under these two categories. The reason for this is because the suggested factors or conditions were guidelines meant to direct my line of inquiry.

Saskatchewan school boards need to consider ways in which they can develop anti-racist education policies for teachers, and to also consider ways in which they can assist teachers in successfully integrating Aboriginal content and perspectives into the curriculum as recommended strategies to meet the goal of having all students develop appreciation and knowledge of the contributions of First Nations and Métis people (Inspiring Success, 2009). It is within this mandate that the significance and contribution of my research resides. As teachers now need to develop an understanding of anti-racist education, then consideration must be given to how we can best support teachers in this directive. I wanted to conduct this research to learn the reasons teachers seek out the support of SAFE, a professional organization, in their efforts to become more involved and knowledgeable in anti-racist education.

What I have come to understand is that teachers became involved in SAFE because of their personal experiences either witnessing or experiencing racism or oppression and their desire to belong to a network of like-minded people for relationship building and overall support, as well as learning how to make their classroom resources inclusive of marginalized perspectives. The ability to reflect on their own thoughts and actions and to take risks were highly valued. There was an over-arching longing for social justice; teachers wanted to learn how to make

changes through an anti-racist framework based on their own unique personal experiences. The changes they sought were directly connected to their life experiences. In other words, what they had either witnessed or experienced was what they were hoping to remedy and they viewed SAFE as a tool to help them achieve their goals.

Teachers value the networking opportunities that SAFE provides in order to enhance their knowledge of classroom activities and curriculum resources as well as building relationships with other like-minded teachers in order to have a support system in place. The literature supports the use of networks and relationship building as methods to nurture growth in anti-racist education as well as strengthening efficacy in integrating Aboriginal content and perspectives in the curriculum (Kovach, 2010; St. Denis, 2010). Donaldson (1997) has demonstrated that through forums, teachers can feel strength in numbers and therefore more empowered, "Taking a public stand against racism and an interest in enhancing anti-racist education teaching skills were not admired among the masses of teachers. However, formulating cohort groups and creating a team of allies empowered the volunteers" (p. 33). Networking opportunities, such as what SAFE provides, can help teachers learn from each other and build supportive relationships and allies.

These networking opportunities are highly regarded reasons why people join professional organizations. Through research conducted by Marshall and Anderson (2009) they found that often social justice activists experience a feeling of being detached or isolated from other activists. When activists are not aware of others around them who are engaged in the same kind of work, then they are losing out on opportunities to learn from others. Networking opportunities, such as what professional forums like SAFE provide, can create and strengthen relationships between teachers and can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The

literature supports the role of professional organizations as a way to encourage and nurture alliances with colleagues (Bauman, 2008; Thackeray, Neiger, & Roe, 2005; Kamm, 1997). Through networks people can find mentors to learn from which can strengthen their skills, confidence, and commitment to social justice efforts.

Allies can be characterized as those people "who use any opportunity to learn more and then act on what they learn" (Bishop, 1994, p. 109) so in this way the participants in my study can be viewed as allies in anti-racist anti-oppressive education. Kaomea (2005) describes non-Indigenous allies as those people who "interrogate unearned power and privilege (including one's own), and use this privilege to confront oppression and 'stand behind' Natives, so that our voices can be heard" (p. 40). Allies are those teachers who do not consider themselves the sole expert on cultural issues, they are aware of their own social positioning and aware of oppression (Hermes, 2005; St. Denis, 2010). Although my participants were not asked to describe what they believed were characteristics of an ally, through investigating the literature and my data it became clear that they viewed themselves as such. One of the most significant features that led my participants to be classified as allies is the propensity of some participants to be continually aware of their social positioning and the influence that their positionality held. From my research, it becomes clear that forming allies facilitates shared learning and stronger relationships which can ultimately lead to more collaborative work in challenging social injustices. The participants eagerly sought a network of like-minded people from which to learn and draw strength as they searched for ways to challenge oppressive and racist practices that they had experienced or witnessed.

One of the most significant reasons the participants in my study became involved with SAFE is their personal stories directly experiencing or witnessing racist or oppressive practices.

All five of my participants shared stories about moments in their lives that lead them to become interested and committed to work towards social justice; they had all been affected by racism and oppression. These experiences lead them to seek out ways to learn how to challenge injustices. Literature supports these types of experiences as being significant catalysts for involvement in social justice efforts. Kanu (2005) found that the non-Aboriginal teachers in her study all identified a transformational experience that led them to their desire to integrate Aboriginal perspectives. Within her research, she refers to the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies (2003) which further supports transformational experiences as a way in which teachers become attuned to integrate Aboriginal content into the curriculum. In examining what motivates privileged people to support social justice, Goodman (2000) found that the ability to empathize, to experience discomfort between what one believes and what one sees around them, the desire to want a more just society, and a belief in all people deserving dignity and respect can all be motivating factors for social justice. For those participants in my study that witnessed racism or oppression, they talked about these factors as reasons for their desire for social change. Marshall and Anderson (2009) found that a reason activists became involved in social justice was empathy and "seeing or experiencing victimization" (p. 127). They also found that when a teacher understands the impact of oppression or injustice they are more apt to challenge it, "Identifying with or knowing of the harm done by inequities and intolerance inspires activism" (p. 128).

Catherine Borshuk (2004) found that close relationships with marginalized groups can also bring people into social justice. One of my participants had formed close bonds with her students and often spoke of wanting to learn how to be an advocate to help them have their voices heard and acknowledged in a meaningful way. The significance of having these close

relationships is the degree of empathy that can emerge, empathy that can lead people to social justice, "Most, however, made reference to some previous experience of marginality in their personal lives, which may have been important to the development of empathy for less privileged outsiders" (Borshuk, 2004, p. 313). While some participants experienced guilt in recognizing their positions of privilege, they looked to SAFE as a tool for them to move beyond the guilt and into finding ways to create proactive social change. Borshuk (2004) also describes the potential of a universalist worldview which would suggest that people tend to be more interested in social justice based on a perception of interdependence with one another and in a shared common humanity, which is something that one of my research participants spoke about in describing what she hoped to achieve.

Through their own personal life experiences, the participants in my study were able to recognize barriers caused by racism and oppression. For some, it was experiencing a lack of representation in the curriculum or of witnessing oppressive placement testing given to students. For others it was experiencing racism directly in their personal lives. Having these experiences validated compels these teachers further into anti-racist anti-oppressive work and in their desire for social change. When asked what they believe prevents people from becoming involved in anti-racism they identified a denial that racism exists, also known as colour-blindness, and a belief in meritocracy as barriers to social justice. The literature supports these discourses as resistances to anti-racist education (St. Denis & Schick, 2003; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Schick, 2000; Bedard, 2000). An integral step in overcoming resistance to anti-racist education lies in the ability to understand what it means to be an ally to oppressed and marginalized groups (Bishop, 1994) and the impact of developing a race consciousness which includes interrogating one's own Whiteness and White privilege (St. Denis & Schick, 2003; Schick, 2000). In

analyzing the data from my participants, it becomes evident that they, even though they were at different stages of awareness, were all engaged in critical thinking and very self-aware of the impact of social positioning. Kailin (1994) suggests that anti-racist staff development should include learning about institutional racism while also offering space for teachers to investigate the subjective aspects of racism which involves reflection on personal attitudes supporting racist ideology and its origins.

The role of educational experiences for my participants was an interesting factor in becoming involved with SAFE. Three of my research participants had all been enrolled in anti-racist classes, while the other two participants had other education courses designed around transformative education and social justice. Two of the participants were in a master's level program, one of them in a doctoral program, one had a master's degree. It was through these learning experiences that my participants acquired knowledge that helped them understand how racism and oppression operate. Education can have a very influential effect on social justice work. Marshall & Anderson (2009) found that for one of their participants, education was the tool that helped her understand the relationships between different kinds of oppressions, "education enhanced understanding of social justice issues for Sara too, whose eyes were opened in women's studies to the intersectionality of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia" (p. 129 Marshall & Anderson). For my participants having a solid knowledge base in anti-racist education can help teachers develop a greater understanding of how racism and oppression function in our society and be an asset for getting involved in social justice efforts.

My research participants use self-reflection, and this is something that keeps them engaged and wanting to learn more about how to improve their teaching practice. Being able to critically reflect on an action or an idea was an essential part of the process these teachers used to work

towards challenging racism and oppression. They value the ability to stop and reflect about the consequences of thoughts and actions, and felt that not enough people used critical self-reflection. For these teachers, they appreciate being challenged in their thinking and were open to asking questions of oneself. The degree to which teachers value and utilize critical self-reflection was a reason that I had not anticipated as I embarked on this research journey. The work of Paulo Freire becomes pertinent in discussing the role of critical self-reflection. In the quest of liberation from oppression, Freire (1970) calls for active engagement in what he calls praxis. In referring to the force of oppression, he states that "To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only be means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36). This can be viewed an essential step for teachers in understanding the effects of colonization and provide an avenue to begin the work of decolonization in schools.

The literature supports the need to develop a critical consciousness in order to effectively challenge racism and oppression (Freire, 1970). It is through this ability to reflect that one becomes more able to take action (Freire, 1970; Wane, 2009) especially when one becomes knowledgeable about the effects of colonization. Wane (2009) says,

> I have learned that it is important not only to gain knowledge of the history of colonization of my community, but also to examine in what ways this history has affected our lives and relationships on a personal level. It is through this act of reflexivity that the potential to create educational reform also exists. (p. 174)

This process of self-reflection has the potential to challenge what Battiste (2000) refers to as cognitive imperialism, which is a form of colonization used to discredit other knowledge bases to keep Eurocentric thinking and curriculum intact. Cognitive imperialism presents a one-sided

perspective that favours colonizers and how they have come to understand the world. While none of my participants used language such as cognitive imperialism, all were able to recognize that marginalized voices have been silenced in schools. When one becomes aware of the effects of socially constructed knowledge, then through self-reflection there can be space to disrupt and challenge this one-sided perspective transmitted through Eurocentric curriculum, which is considered the work of decolonization.

In order to come to this point of understanding about the curriculum, and take action in a decolonizing way, teachers need to be responsive to learning about how oppression functions and their role in this process. In examining what made some teachers successful teaching in Aboriginal communities, Hermes (2005) found that "...the successful teachers were cognizant of oppression, cultural change, and their own cultural identity" (p. 21). It became clear for the participants in my study that they were critically evaluating their teaching resources to consider the potential effects of what and how they were teaching. Some were explicitly aware of their own actions and how they engaged with themselves and with others in the world, to stop and reflect about the consequences of their beliefs. Some were open to 'turning the gaze on themselves' (Schick & St. Denis, 2003) and viewed this as an integral part of their involvement and willingness in challenging racism and oppression.

A large part of what teachers are hoping to learn from SAFE is how to create and implement resources that foster a sense of community and inclusiveness so that no students will feel alienated, and that the resources would be accurate representations relevant to the lives of their students. They want access to ideas and resources that could help them bring in the experiences of those that are marginalized or oppressed in their classrooms. Although not all of

my participants spoke specifically about implementing Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, the overall purpose for these teachers was to evaluate critically the materials they were using to ensure that it did not oppress or marginalize their students. In order to do this effectively, teachers want to hear what others are doing in their classrooms and gain ideas and advice for themselves in their own teaching practice. In this regard, teachers value the opportunity for encounters with other teachers in order to enhance their own pedagogy.

Kanu (2005) says that one of the challenges that teachers can face when presented with the challenge of integrating Aboriginal content is a lack of confidence which can lead to a hesitation and uncertainty about becoming a 'cultural expert'. She offers the suggestion that teachers need to move away from this assertion and instead consider cultural encounters as a potential for new learning. Hermes (2005) further supports this notion of not becoming a cultural expert which can open up a space for non-Aboriginal teachers to become allies and engage in self-reflection about the effects of Whiteness. Another important point to consider is that teachers should begin moving away from an additive approach with implementing Aboriginal content and into an approach that is transformational where multiple perspectives are taught and students are encouraged to take action against social injustices (Kanu, 2005). Teachers in my research study are eager to learn how to integrate multiple perspectives and to find ways for students to become involved in action projects designed from an anti-racist perspective with a focus on social justice. They view the opportunity for networking and discussions as tools to strengthen their ability to make classroom resources more inclusive through making a greater connection to the context and relevancy of those resources.

The literature supports the need for more professional development opportunities in order to make integrating Aboriginal content effective (Kovach, 2010; Kanu, 2005). The

specific goal in this endeavour is to ensure that teachers understand how to use the materials and are able to successfully identify them in context of how to use them effectively. However, integrating Aboriginal content does not in itself imply an anti-racist stance as a teacher can integrate content without examining systems of power and privilege. Teachers in my study seek out the networking that SAFE can provide in order to learn from others thereby immersing themselves in professional development opportunities. Studies have shown that teachers need to have a supportive and well organized system in place in order to meaningfully implement Aboriginal content into the curriculum (Kanu, 2005; Kovach, 2010). Teachers need to be provided with opportunities to work and learn together, as Kovach (2010) found in her research,

> From contending with the pervasiveness of western pedagogical privilege to feeling unsupported, the research is clear: infusing IK across the curriculum in a sustainable and lasting way will not take hold institutionally if left solely to individual instructors acting in isolation. (p. 48)

There is also literature that demonstrates the need for ongoing professional development efforts in order to sustain momentum and keep people engaged in their work. In evaluating an anti-racist course that was offered to teachers, Lawrence & Tatum (1997) found that

> school systems like these, which have marshalled their professional development efforts into courses such as the one described here, need to create ongoing opportunities for follow up and establish peer support networks for educators to [sic] insure continued movement from awareness to action. (p. 341)

Teachers need ongoing professional development activities in order for meaningful changes to occur. In fact, the desire for professional development opportunities was a significant factor that can lead people to join professional organizations (Bauman, 2008; Kamm, 1997). Professional

organizations are also viewed as a way for their members to stay current with new information relevant to their field; members value this opportunity to stay informed (Larrabee & Morehead, 2011). It is clear that my participants view SAFE as a valuable forum which could connect them to other teachers. They want learning opportunities in order to strengthen their knowledge of how to include multiple perspectives and how to make the integration of Aboriginal content more meaningful than just a 'token' approach.

As my participants had a desire to make curriculum more inclusive and representative of perspectives that have been marginalized in education, it becomes clear this desire stems from an acknowledgement that there are absent voices within the curriculum; voices that, if given a place within curriculum, have the potential to transform the way in which learning and education are perceived. These teachers are seeking methods to bring in the experiences of the marginalized and oppressed; those which are often absent in mainstream curriculum. Wane (2009) offers us an explanation of what it means to create an inclusive curriculum: "to have an inclusive education, it is necessary to deconstruct the current system to discover the gaps and absences of voices" (p. 162). It is with this goal in mind that teachers involved in anti-racist anti-oppressive education can work to privilege those marginalized voices and histories within current educational spaces. In this spirit, decolonization work acknowledges that "domination does not always come in the form of state conquest but rather in the diffusion of ideas" (Wane, 2009, p. 165) and this is precisely what anti-racist education works to challenge and disrupt.

The literature also identifies the need to have Aboriginal instructional resources available to teachers, and to have effective professional development so that teachers can learn how to make use of the resources (Kanu, 2005; Kaomea, 2005). However, one participant in my study noted there are increasingly more resources being created for teachers to support Aboriginal

perspectives while obtaining resources for different cultures is proving a more difficult challenge. While this is a noteworthy observation, I believe it is also important to consider how we can support present-day immigrants to understand the history and ongoing colonization and its effects on Aboriginal people.

The participants in my study became involved with SAFE because they want guidance and advice on practical strategies for challenging racism and oppression. They are looking for how to apply their knowledge into taking proactive and solution-based approaches. Some of the topics they expressed interest in are learning how to be an ally from a White perspective, how to effectively challenge racism and oppression, and how to make anti-racist education more applicable in the classroom. In addition, some teachers expressed a willingness to share their experiences, knowledge, and struggles with other teachers in a mentorship capacity.

The desire of these teachers to learn concrete ways and examples for action shows their movement from awareness and understanding to action. Paulo Freire (1970) describes the need for praxis in transforming oppressor and oppressed relationships and says that to sacrifice action leads to verbalism and that a sacrifice of reflection leads to activism, action for action's sake without true potential for authentic transformation (p. 75). What this means is that activism involves a delicate balance; preaching for the cause and action for the cause. If we do not engage in active reflection in our lives then we run the risk of taking action simply because we believe that to be the right choice. If all we do is think and speak about what should be done then nothing will ever change. In other words, we need have both the awareness and understanding of an injustice and the ability to take action. There is power in praxis as it is a way to engage in social justice, and my research demonstrates that when teachers are engaged in

critical self-reflection and critically evaluating their teaching methods they become more driven towards taking action against social injustices.

Although some of my participants are eager to find practical strategies for engaging in social change, the literature points out that self-reflection should be viewed as a type of action. Freire (1970) believes that,

> Action and reflection occur simultaneously. A critical analysis of reality may, however, reveal that a particular form of action is impossible or inappropriate *at the present time*. Those who through reflection perceive the infeasibility or inappropriateness of one or another form of action (which should accordingly be postponed or substituted) cannot thereby be accused of inaction. Critical reflection is also action. (p. 123)

Those teachers who are seeking practical solutions and ideas for creating change should be mindful of this, as coming to understand critical reflection as a form of action could help to relieve potential anxiety or hopelessness of not being part of any 'solution'. Critical self-reflection can be viewed as a kind of 'internal' action as it is work within oneself. The participants in my study view the change they wish to implement as more external as they are looking for effective ways to engage with others in terms of challenging racism and oppression.

Literature also demonstrates that allies understand that they must act with others to contribute to change (Bishop, 1994). They "believe that to do nothing is to reinforce the *status quo*; not to decide is to decide; if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem" (Bishop, 1994, p. 110). For the participants in my study, a reason for their involvement in SAFE includes wanting access to other like-minded people to learn from, share ideas, and work together. As one participant stated, it is through building these relationships that collaborative work may begin. Some are looking for guidance from those who are more experienced in

challenging racism and oppression so they could learn the strategies as well. It is here that the value of establishing relationships becomes so vital for learning and growth in anti-racist education.

Conclusion

In coming to understand for what reasons teachers participate in SAFE and what they are hoping to learn or contribute to SAFE, I have realized that the powerful role of personal experiences with racism and oppression in one's life, and coming to understand these experiences with an anti-racist anti-oppressive perspective, can compel people into social justice efforts. It is because of their personal experiences that my participants were seeking ways to challenge and change what they viewed as racist and oppressive practices in schools. I admire their willingness to reflect on their thoughts and actions without hesitation. For some, they were constantly aware of the value in being able to identify their own social positioning. They were open to taking risks, asking questions, and being challenged and they recognized this as a necessary part of the work in becoming teachers committed to social justice. For me, there is immense hope in the commitment my participants showed in wanting to further broaden and strengthen their own learning in anti-racist anti-oppressive education, and their desire to want to do this with other like minded people speaks to the incredible potential of building allies and then nurturing these relationships. They demonstrated that forming allies can facilitate shared learning from one another and that their knowledge of anti-racist anti-oppressive work can lead to critically evaluating their role in racism and oppression.

Through their stories, my participants taught me that it requires a commitment to learning in order to further anti-racist anti-oppressive efforts. They view SAFE as a very valuable

learning tool that could help them meet their goals in becoming teachers who are more aware of how racism and oppression operate and also how to challenge domination in their pedagogy. The role that professional organizations and forums can have in assisting teachers in building their knowledge of anti-racist anti-oppressive education should not be underestimated. Professional forums like SAFE, provide teachers with like minded colleagues. The potential in these relationships encompass sharing knowledge and expertise, acquiring a support system, and distributing resources. SAFE is a special subject council, supported by the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation, and this forum privileges anti-racist anti-oppressive education and is a constant reminder of why social justice efforts are needed. My participants were clear; a forum like SAFE is a valuable way for them to learn more about anti-racist anti-oppressive education and to build relationships with like minded teachers in order to make pedagogical changes in support of social justice.

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Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

Letter of Invitation

Research Project Title
Perceptions of Teachers Participation in the Social Justice and Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive Forum of Education.

Dear Teacher:

I am conducting research into the reasons that brought teachers to become members of the Social Justice and Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive Forum of Education (SAFE). Beyond looking at why teachers are aligning with, and wanting to learn more about anti-racist education, the research will also include what teachers hope to learn from or contribute to SAFE.

I am inviting your participation in this study because of your interest in anti-racist education and your membership in SAFE. I am interested in your perspective on the motivating factors that lead teachers to engage in anti-racist education and what you imagine for SAFE in terms of what you can learn or what you hope to contribute to SAFE.

Rationale for the Research:

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has identified the need for all learners to develop appreciation and knowledge of the contributions of First Nations and Métis people as the second goal outlined in their policy document, *Inspiring Success*, 2009. A recommended strategy by the ministry is to assist school boards in developing anti-racist education policies and to "provide professional development for staff that allows them to deconstruct their beliefs and develop their own knowledge base in anti-racist education" (Inspiring Success, 2009, p 20). Reaching this goal is dependent on the involvement and degree of participation in anti-racist education by teachers within Saskatchewan Schools. Forums on anti-racist education have an influential role in assisting educators to gain the courage and skills to work as allies against systems of oppression (Donaldson, 1997). Research has shown the need for supportive spaces/alliances in order to better facilitate professional development and growth to improve student academic success (Quiocho & Rios, 2000, MaMahon, 2007). Since there is such a high percentage of non-Aboriginal teachers in Canada, the importance of allies needs to be taken seriously as anti-racist education depends upon the work of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Kaomea, 2005). This study seeks to investigate for what reasons teachers have chosen to participate in SAFE, what goals they have for their participation in terms of what they are hoping to learn or contribute to SAFE, and how this forum can assist them in remaining engaged in anti-racist education. Furthermore, the study will consider in what ways SAFE can contribute to alliance building efforts.

Research for the study will involve an investigation into the historical relationship between Aboriginals and White settler society and how this has shaped the contemporary power dynamics between these two groups, specifically in Saskatchewan. It will also consider the implications for a cultural appreciation or multiculturalism approach versus an anti-racist approach and how the establishment of SAFE is reflective of these very different approaches. Furthermore, research into the significance of allies will be conducted and in what ways forums contribute to coalition

and alliance building. As the study attempts to address why teachers are becoming members of a forum to develop their knowledge of anti-racist and anti-oppressive education, research will be conducted to clarify what a forum is and how forums are different from other educational professional development activities, and what other forums teachers can participate in. A comparative analysis will be conducted between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal[3] participants in order to determine if there are differing motivations for their involvement with SAFE and how these potential differences shape their participation and engagement with SAFE.

Research Question: What conditions (school support, curriculum or resource availability, etc.) or factors (teacher knowledge, background, values, perceptions, or attitudes toward risk-taking) have lead Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers to become members of SAFE, and what do they hope to learn or contribute to SAFE?

Your participation in the research will consist of an interview that will be no longer than 1.5 hours. The interview will take place at a location decided by the participant. Each participant will receive a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview to provide an opportunity for thought and consideration before the interview. My goal is to complete the data collection (interviews) by February 2010. The interview will be tape recorded through an audio recorder and any information that could be identifying will not be reported. Upon transcription of the data, you will have an opportunity to review and sign a transcript release form.

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Please indicate your desire to participate in this study by contacting the researcher. A consent form will be provided for you to sign and return. Upon the signing of the consent form, you will be provided with a copy of it to keep for your records. If you have any questions about this study please contact the researcher and more details can be provided.

Researcher Contact Information
Cheryl Hoftyzer
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Sincerely,
Cheryl Hoftyzer

[3] For the purposes of this study, non-Aboriginal is defined as those teachers who identify as being of White settler society.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Research Question:

- What conditions (school support, curriculum or resource availability, etc.) or factors (teacher knowledge, background, values, perceptions, or attitudes toward risk-taking) have lead teachers to become members of the SAFE forum, and what do they hope to learn or contribute to SAFE?

Structured Questions:

- Do you identify as Aboriginal or Non-Aboriginal?
- What is your gender?
- What subject area and grade level do you teach?
- How many years have you been a teacher?
- In which division/school board are you employed?
- How did you hear about SAFE?
- Other than your recent membership in SAFE, have you had any other exposures in anti-racist education? If yes, please explain.

Semi-Structured Questions / Open-ended Questions:

- What contributed, or motivated you to become a member of SAFE?
- Why did you decide to become a member of SAFE?
- What do you hope to learn from, or contribute to SAFE?
- What resources do you hope will be provided through SAFE?
- How do you think these resources will assist in your understanding of anti-racist education?
- Was there a particular experience or event that motivated you to become actively involved in anti-racist education?
- What do you see as personal or systematic challenges that prevent engagement in anti-racist, anti-oppressive education?
- In what ways do you think SAFE can assist in your engagement with anti-racist, anti-oppressive education?
- What kinds of supports or resources do you feel are required in order to increase your professional development or efficacy in this area?
- How do you think you will grow as a teacher since becoming more involved in anti-racist education?

Appendix C: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *Perceptions of Teachers Participation in the Social Justice and Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive Forum of Education.*
Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researcher: Cheryl Hoftyzer, Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of the study is to examine teacher motivations in becoming a member of the SAFE forum as a way to increase professional knowledge in anti-racist education. Beyond looking at why teachers are aligning with, and wanting to learn more about anti-racist education, the research will also include what teachers hope to learn from or contribute to the SAFE forum. Participants will be invited to attend an interview with the researcher that will be no more than 1.5 hours in length. At any time during the interview you may request that the recording device be turned off.

The findings of this study will be analyzed into thematic groupings and will incorporate direct quotations. As such, any identifying information in the interview transcripts will not be reported. You will have an opportunity to review and sign a transcript release form. The findings of this study will be used towards the thesis component of the researchers' masters of education at the University of Saskatchewan. The results of the research data may be distributed in the following ways:

- Dissemination of research findings in the researchers' thesis
- Dissemination of research report with findings to participants
- Dissemination of research report with findings to the College of Education
- Dissemination of research report with findings to community (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) as requested
- Presentation of research findings to research and scholarly community (classrooms, conferences, workshops)
- Publication of findings of research in several articles for publication in scholarly journal.

Potential Benefits: This research will make a contribution toward the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's goal of offering anti-racist education to teachers as a way to increase appreciation and knowledge of the contributions of First Nations and Métis people. This research will contribute in understanding why teachers participate in anti-racist education and on ways to support anti-racist education.

Potential Risks: It is estimated that participants will not experience risks associated with undue stress such as psychological discomfort, embarrassment, stigmatization, loss of privacy or

reputation, or any physical or economic risks as a result of participating in this study. Participants will be notified, verbally and through the consent process, that they do not have to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with. While this research is asking for participants to engage in an interview about their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations, it is not a subject that is of a deeply emotional and/or personal nature that is subject to elicit risk associated with emotional vulnerability. To ensure that all identifying information is removed from the data, participants will have the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure that they cannot be identified with the data.

Storage of Data: Upon completion of the research study, the supervisor, M. Kovach, will store the data in a locked filing cabinet in her office at the University of Saskatchewan. She will store the data at her office, at the University of Saskatchewan, for five years upon completion of my study. After five years, she will destroy the data beyond recovery.

Confidentiality: Your participation will not be anonymous as the researcher will know who has participated. Participant privacy will be protected by arranging to meet somewhere other than their place of work. Participant confidentiality will be protected by ensuring that identifying information will not be reported from the data. After the interview, and prior to the data being included in the final thesis, the participant will be given the opportunity to review the transcript and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts. The thesis will include summarized results and direct quotations. The direct quotations will ensure that identifying information which could personally identify the participant will be removed.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the researcher. If you withdraw from the research project at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until the data has been pooled. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on November 10, 2010. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

Follow-Up or Debriefing:
Participants may find out about the results of this research project through accessing the University of Saskatchewan's thesis collection upon completion of the thesis.

Consent to Participate:
I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project,

understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____
(Name of Participant)	(Date)
_____	_____
(Signature of Participant)	(Signature of Researcher)

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